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H. DE BALZAC

COMÉDIE HUMAINE

Edited by

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The House, rue Fortunée, Paris, in which Balzac died.

H. DE BALZAC

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS

(*Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*)

VOL. I

Translated by

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with a Preface by

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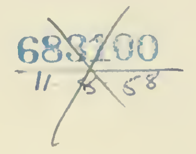


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PREFACE

Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes has the interest (which it shares with only one or two others of Balzac's works), if not exactly of touching the two extremities of his prosperous career, at any rate of stretching over a great part of it. It also exemplifies the very uncertain and fortuitous scheme of the *Comédie* and its component scenes. At first nothing of it appeared but the first part, and only half of that, under the title of *La Torpille* (Esther Gobseck's nickname), which was published, together with *La Femme Supérieure*, the first form of *Les Employés*, and *La Maison Nucingen*, in 1838. Five years later it appeared in a newspaper as *Esther, ou Les Amours d'un vieux Banquier*, the first part being now completed, and the second added. It was not till 1846 that *Où mènent les mauvais Chemins* appeared, and this book itself had different titles. Finally, in Balzac's very last period of writing at the end of 1846, or the beginning of 1847—for he and his bibliographer are at issue on that point,—*La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* was added as a fourth part, making the book, already one of the longest, now by far the longest of all. But the four were not published together till the *édition définitive*, many years after Balzac's death.

It would in any case have been necessary to devote two of these volumes to so great a mass of matter, and I have taken the liberty of separating *Vautrin* from the rest for the purposes of introduction. The truth is that the book ends much more artistically with *Ou mènent les mauvais Chemins*; and if Balzac really intended to make *La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* a continuation, this, as well as the great length of the book, would lead me to imagine that he had in mind rather a sort of subdivision of the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne* than a single work.

For it must be at once evident that with the deaths of Esther and of Lucien, art, sense, and truth require that the curtain should fall. It may have been very desirable to finish off Vautrin; and, as I shall have occasion to point out, he is a very interesting person. But his *mauvais chemin* is quite a different one from that of Esther; and he is only indirectly concerned with the particular *splendeurs et misères.*

On the other hand, the history of 'La Torpille' and of Lucien de Rubempré is by itself smoother and more complete. It affords Balzac, no doubt, opportunities of indulging a very large number of his extensive assortment of fancies, not to say fads, and of bringing in a great number of the personages of his stock company. Vautrin, the terrible and mysterious, in his new avatar, is only one of these. Corentin reappears from the far distance of *Les Chouans*; but playing no very dissimilar part, though his machinations are directed against less innocent persons. We receive abundant information as to the way in which Baron Nucingen got rid of the money which he obtained by means already detailed with equal

care elsewhere. Madame de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy play important parts; and many others come and go.

But still Esther van Gobseck and Lucien Chardon de Rubempré are as much the hero and heroine of the story, and make the first three parts as much a story to themselves, as Le Père Goriot and Eugénie Grandet are the hero and heroine of the books to which they very justly give their names.

I forget whether Lucien de Rubempré, in the numerous and rather idle Balzac 'keys' which MM. Cerfberr and Christophe have not deigned to include in their *Répertoire*, is identified with any actual personage. It has been, and will be observed, that Balzac was too great an artist either to need, or, indeed, often to attempt, this commonplace and catchpenny means of interest. But in the world of fiction in general, and of the *Comédie* in particular, Lucien is half-complement, half-counterpart of Eugéne de Rastignac. He is the adventurer, not entirely without good blood in his veins, who ventures into the intersecting or overlapping worlds of fashion, of journalism, of speculation, and of politics, but who has not, like Rastignac, either strength or coolness of head to swim through the whirlpool and reach the shore. It may be interesting to the reader to form his own opinion how far Lucien's ruin—brought about, be it remembered, by charges of which he is actually innocent—is due to the evil, though not in his case intentionally hostile, influence of Vautrin, how far it is due to his own weakness. Balzac was too much of an artist to decide very definitely either way; but despite his rather mistaken admiration of Vautrin, I think he had the sense to

give most weight to the internal causes. The moral—for there is always a moral in Balzac—is, of course, the old one of a thousand fables and a thousand forms, the best of which perhaps is the Spenserian apposition of 'Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold,' with 'Be not *too* bold'—the moral that on the 'Brigg of Dread' of ambition and covetousness there is nothing but absolute perdition for him who cannot keep his feet and his head. There is not perhaps so much irony as there would be in some writers about the presentation of Lucien, who is really a poor creature enough, as the very darling of all the great ladies of Paris as well as of persons at the other end of the scale; but it is there.

With Esther it is even plainer sailing. Her history is simply a 'Harlot's Progress' on a more fantastic and gorgeous scale, with the final fortune thrown in (this applies to Lucien as well as to her) for a climax of Nemesis. Perhaps there is another moral here—that when any one has once embarked on this particular *mauvais chemin* it is not merely idle, but ruinous, to indulge in sincere affection for anybody—that you must 'play the game,' here as elsewhere, and that you cannot be permitted to play the fair game and the foul at once.

On the whole, I should put this book a little below Balzac's very best, but in the forefront of his average work. Some I know have rated it very highly; but such a slightly glorified 'Alphonse' as Rubempré is too disgusting a hero to be tolerated without even greater power than Balzac has here put forth, even though Esther to no small extent redeems him.

A good deal of the rather complicated bibliography of *Splendeurs et Misères* has necessarily been given above. Some additional details here may complete the information in regard to the whole of it, as Balzac finally arranged it, that is to say, with the *Dernière Incarnation* included. *La Torpille* (*vide supra*) came out as a book without any previous newspaper publication, but with *La Femme Supérieure* (now called *Les Employés*) and *La Maison Nucingen* in 1838, published in two volumes by Werdet. It was divided into three chapters with a view to *feuilleton* publication in the *Presse*. But this did not appear. The rest of the present *Comment aiment les Filles*, with most of *A Combien l'Amour revient aux Vieillards*, did appear in this form in *Le Parisien* during the month of June 1843 and a few days in May and July. The first part was included as well in this publication. *Le Parisien* was not successful, and the end of *A Combien l'Amour* never came out, but is included in a three-volume book publication of the thing next year by de Potter. Then the whole, which had in *Le Parisien* been called *Esther, ou Les Amours d'un veux Banquier*, received its present general heading with the addition '*Esther*.' The book was next entered in the *Comédie*, the first part being called *Esther Heureuse*. *Ou mènent les mauvais Chemins* appeared in the newspaper *L'Epoque* during July 1846, and was then called *Une Instruction criminelle*; but it was forthwith included in the *Comédie* under its actual title, and a year later published separately by Souverain. But *Splendeurs et Misères* had a bad habit of killing journals under it; and *L'Epoque* too, having died, *La dernière Incarnation* appeared in the *Presse* (strangely enough,

seeing that this was the journal which ought to have published the first part ten years earlier) in April and May 1847. Chlendowski published it as a book the same year. The date 'December 1847' appears to have been a mistake or a whim of Balzac's.

G. S.

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS

To His Highness
Prince Alfonso Serafino di Porcia.

Allow me to place your name at the beginning of an essentially Parisian work, thought out in your house during these latter days. Is it not natural that I should offer you the flowers of rhetoric that blossomed in your garden, watered with the regrets I suffered from home-sickness, which you soothed, as I wandered under the boschetti *whose elms reminded me of the Champs-Elysées? Thus, perchance, may I expiate the crime of having dreamed of Paris under the shadow of the Duomo, of having longed for our muddy streets on the clean and elegant flagstones of Porta-Renza. When I have some book to publish which may be dedicated to a Milanese lady, I shall have the happiness of finding names already dear to your old Italian romancers among those of women whom we love, and to whose memory I would beg you to recall your sincerely affectionate*

July 1838. *De Balzac.*

ESTHER IN LUCK; OR, HOW A HARLOT CAN LOVE

In 1824, at the last opera ball of the season, several masks were struck by the beauty of a youth who was wandering about the passages and green-room with the air of a man in search of a woman kept at home by

unexpected circumstances. The secret of this behaviour, now dilatory and again hurried, is known only to old women and to certain experienced loungers. In this immense assembly the crowd does not trouble itself much to watch the crowd; each one's interest is impassioned, and even idlers are preoccupied.

The young dandy was so much absorbed in his anxious quest that he did not observe his own success; he did not hear, he did not see the ironical exclamations of admiration, the genuine appreciation, the biting gibes, the soft invitations of some of the masks. Though he was so handsome as to rank among those exceptional persons who come to an opera ball in search of an adventure, and who expect it as confidently as men looked for a lucky *coup* at roulette in Frascati's day, he seemed quite philosophically sure of his evening; he must be the hero of one of those mysteries with three actors which constitute an opera ball, and are known only to those who play a part in them; for, to young wives who come merely to say, 'I have seen it,' to country people, to inexperienced youths, and to foreigners, the opera house must on those nights be the palace of fatigue and dulness. To these, that black swarm, slow and serried—coming, going, winding, turning, returning, mounting, descending, comparable only to ants on a pile of wood—is no more intelligible than the Bourse to a Breton peasant who has never heard of the *Grand livre*.

With a few rare exceptions, men wear no masks in Paris; a man in a domino is thought ridiculous. In this the spirit of the nation betrays itself. Men who want to hide their good fortune can enjoy the opera ball without going there; and masks who are absolutely compelled to go in come out again at once. One of the most amusing scenes is the crush at the doors produced as soon as the dancing begins, by the rush of persons getting away and struggling with those who are pushing in. So the men who wear masks are either

jealous husbands who come to watch their wives, or husbands on the loose who do not wish to be watched by them—two situations equally ridiculous.

Now, our young man was followed, though he knew it not, by a man in a mask, dogging his steps, short and stout, with a rolling gait, like a barrel. To every one familiar with the opera this disguise betrayed a stockbroker, a banker, a lawyer, some citizen soul suspicious of infidelity. For, in fact, in really high society, no one courts such humiliating proofs. Several masks had laughed as they pointed this preposterous figure out to each other; some had spoken to him, a few young men had made game of him, but his stolid manner showed entire contempt for these aimless shafts; he went on whither the young man led him, as a hunted wild boar goes on and pays no heed to the bullets whistling about his ears, or the dogs barking at his heels.

Though at first sight pleasure and anxiety wear the same livery—the noble black robe of Venice—and though all is confusion at an opera ball, the various circles composing Parisian society meet there, recognise, and watch each other. There are certain ideas so clear to the initiated that this scrawled medley of interests is as legible to them as any amusing novel. So, to these old hands, this man could not be here by appointment; he would infallibly have worn some token, red, white, or green, such as notifies a happy meeting previously agreed on. Was it a case of revenge?

Seeing the domino following so closely in the wake of a man apparently happy in an assignation, some of the gazers looked again at the handsome face, on which anticipation had set its divine halo. The youth was interesting; the longer he wandered, the more curiosity he excited. Everything about him proclaimed the habits of refined life. In obedience to a fatal law of the time we live in, there is not much difference, physical or moral, between the most elegant and best bred son of a

duke and peer and this attractive youth, whom poverty had not long since held in its iron grip in the heart of Paris. Beauty and youth might cover in him deep gulfs, as in many a young man who longs to play a part in Paris without having the capital to support his pretensions, and who, day after day, risks all to win all, by sacrificing to the god who has most votaries in this royal city, namely, Chance. At the same time, his dress and manners were above reproach; he trod the classic floor of the opera house as one accustomed there. Who can have failed to observe that there, as in every zone in Paris, there is a manner of being which shows who you are, what you are doing, whence you come, and what you want?

'What a handsome young fellow; and here we may turn round to look at him,' said a mask, in whom accustomed eyes recognised a lady of position.

'Do not you remember him?' replied the man on whose arm she was leaning. 'Madame du Châtelet introduced him to you——'

'What, is that the apothecary's son she fancied herself in love with, who became a journalist, Mademoiselle Coralie's lover?'

'I fancied he had fallen too low ever to pull himself up again, and I cannot understand how he can show himself again in the world of Paris,' said Comte Sixte du Châtelet.

'He has the air of a prince,' the mask went on, 'and it is not the actress he lived with who could give it him. My cousin, who understood him, could not lick him into shape. I should like to know the mistress of this Sargine; tell me something about him that will enable me to mystify him.'

This couple, whispering as they watched the young man, became the object of study to the square-shouldered domino.

'Dear Monsieur Chardon,' said the Préfet of the Charente, taking the dandy's arm, 'allow me to introduce

you to some one who wishes to renew acquaintance with you——'

'Dear Comte Châtelet,' replied the young man, 'that lady taught me how ridiculous was the name by which you address me. A patent from the king has restored to me that of my mother's family—the Rubemprés. Although the fact has been announced in the papers, it relates to so unimportant a person that I need not blush to recall it to my friends, my enemies, and those who are neither—— You may class yourself where you will, but I am sure you will not disapprove of a step to which I was advised by your wife when she was still only Madame de Bargeton.'

This neat retort, which made the Marquise smile, gave the Préfet of la Charente a nervous chill. 'You may tell her,' Lucien went on, 'that I now bear *gules*, a bull raging *argent* on a meadow *vert*.'

'Raging argent,' echoed Châtelet.

'Madame la Marquise will explain to you, if you do not know, why that old coat is a little better than the chamberlain's key and Imperial gold bees which you bear on yours, to the great despair of Madame Châtelet, *née* Négrepelisse d'Espard,' said Lucien quickly.

'Since you recognise me, I cannot puzzle you; and I could never tell you how much you puzzle me,' said the Marquise d'Espard, amazed at the coolness and impertinence to which the man had risen whom she had formerly despised.

'Then allow me, Madame, to preserve my only chance of occupying your thoughts by remaining in that mysterious twilight,' said he, with the smile of a man who does not wish to risk assured happiness.

'I congratulate you on your changed fortunes,' said the Comte du Châtelet to Lucien.

'I take it as you offer it,' replied Lucien, bowing with much grace to the Marquise.

'What a coxcomb!' said the Count in an undertone

to Madame d'Espard. 'He has succeeded in winning an ancestry.'

'With these young men such coxcombry, when it is addressed to us, almost always implies some success in high places,' said the lady; 'for with you older men it means ill-fortune. And I should very much like to know which of my grand lady friends has taken this fine bird under her patronage; then I might find the means of amusing myself this evening. My ticket, anonymously sent, is no doubt a bit of mischief planned by a rival and having something to do with this young man. His impertinence is to order; keep an eye on him. I will take the Duc de Navarrein's arm. You will be able to find me again.'

Just as Madame d'Espard was about to address her cousin, the mysterious mask came between her and the Duke to whisper in her ear—

'Lucien loves you; he wrote the note. Your Préfet is his greatest foe; how can he speak in his presence?'

The stranger moved off, leaving Madame d'Espard a prey to a double surprise. The Marquise knew no one in the world who was capable of playing the part assumed by this mask; she suspected a snare, and went to sit down out of sight. The Comte Sixte du Châtelet—whom Lucien had abridged of his ambitious *du* with an emphasis that betrayed long meditated revenge—followed the handsome dandy, and presently met a young man to whom he thought he could speak without reserve.

'Well, Rastignac, have you seen Lucien? He has come out in a new skin.'

'If I were half as good looking as he is, I should be twice as rich,' replied the fine gentleman, in a light but meaning tone, expressive of keen raillery.

'No!' said the fat mask in his ear, repaying a thousand ironies in one by the accent he lent the monosyllable.

Rastignac, who was not the man to swallow an affront,

stood as if struck by lightning, and allowed himself to be led into a recess by a grasp of iron which he could not shake off.

'You young cockerel, hatched in Mother Vauquer's coop—you, whose heart failed you to clutch old Taillefer's millions when the hardest part of the business was done—let me tell you, for your personal safety, that if you do not treat Lucien like the brother you love, you are in our power, while we are not in yours. Silence and submission! or I shall join your game and upset the skittles. Lucien de Rubempré is under the protection of the strongest power of the day—the Church. Choose between life and death.—Answer.'

Rastignac felt giddy, like a man who has slept in a forest and wakes to see by his side a famishing lioness. He was frightened, and there was no one to see him; the boldest men yield to fear under such circumstances.

'No one but *he* can know—or would dare——' he murmured to himself.

The mask clutched his hand tighter to prevent his finishing his sentence.

'Act as if I were *he*,' he said.

Rastignac then acted like a millionaire on the high road with a brigand's pistol at his head; he surrendered.

'My dear Count,' said he to du Châtelet, to whom he presently returned, 'if you care for your position in life, treat Lucien de Rubempré as a man whom you will one day see holding a place far above that where you stand.'

The mask made an imperceptible gesture of approbation, and went off in search of Lucien.

'My dear fellow, you have changed your opinion of him very suddenly,' replied the Préfet with justifiable surprise.

'As suddenly as men change who belong to the centre and vote with the right,' replied Rastignac to the Préfet-

Député, whose vote had for a few days failed to support the Ministry.

'Are there such things as opinions nowadays? There are only interests,' observed des Lupeaulx, who had heard them. 'What is the case in point?'

'The case of the Sieur de Rubempré, whom Rastignac is setting up as a person of consequence,' said du Châtelet to the Secretary-General.

'My dear Count,' replied des Lupeaulx very seriously, 'Monsieur de Rubempré is a young man of the highest merit, and has such good interest at his back that I should be delighted to renew my acquaintance with him.'

'There he is, rushing into the wasps' nest of the rakes of the day,' said Rastignac.

The three speakers looked towards a corner where a group of recognised wits had gathered, men of more or less celebrity, and several men of fashion. These gentlemen made common stock of their jests, their remarks, and their scandal, trying to amuse themselves till something should amuse them. Among this strangely mingled party were some men with whom Lucien had had transactions, combining ostensibly kind offices with covert false dealing.

'Hallo! Lucien, my boy, why here we are patched up again—new stuffing and a new cover. Where have we come from? Have we mounted the high horse once more with little offerings from Florine's boudoir? Bravo, old chap!' and Blondet released Finot to put his arm affectionately round Lucien and press him to his heart.

Andoche Finot was the proprietor of a review on which Lucien had worked for almost nothing, and to which Blondet gave the benefit of his collaboration, of the wisdom of his suggestions and the depth of his views. Finot and Blondet embodied Bertrand and

Raton, with this difference—that la Fontaine's cat at last showed that he knew himself to be duped, while Blondet, though he knew that he was being fleeced, still did all he could for Finot. This brilliant *condottiere* of the pen was, in fact, long to remain a slave. Finot hid a brutal strength of will under a heavy exterior, under the drowsiness of impertinent stupidity, with a superficial polish of wit, as a labourer rubs his bread with garlic. He knew how to garner what he gleaned, ideas and crown-pieces alike, in the fields of the dissolute life led by men engaged in letters or in politics.

Blondet, for his sins, had placed his powers at the service of Finot's vices and idleness. Always at war with necessity, he was one of the race of poverty-stricken and superior men who can do everything for the fortune of others and nothing for their own, Aladdins who let other men borrow their lamp. These excellent advisers have a clear and penetrating judgment so long as it is not distracted by personal interest. In them it is the head and not the arm that acts. Hence the looseness of their morality, and hence the reproach heaped upon them by inferior minds. Blondet would share his purse with a comrade he had affronted the day before ; he would dine, drink, and sleep with one whom he would demolish on the morrow. His amusing paradoxes excused everything. Accepting the whole world as a jest, he did not want to be taken seriously ; young, beloved, almost famous and contented, he did not devote himself, like Finot, to acquiring the fortune an old man needs.

The most difficult form of courage, perhaps, is that which Lucien needed at this moment to get rid of Blondet as he had just got rid of Madame d'Espard and Châtelet. In him, unfortunately, the joys of vanity hindered the exercise of pride—the basis, beyond doubt, of many great things. His vanity had triumphed in the

previous encounter; he had shown himself as a rich man, happy and scornful, to two persons who had scorned him when he was poor and wretched. But how could a poet, like an old diplomate, run the gauntlet with two self-styled friends, who had welcomed him in misery, under whose roof he had slept in the worst of his troubles? Finot, Blondet, and he had grovelled together; they had wallowed in such orgies as consume something more than money. Like soldiers who find no market for their courage, Lucien had just done what many men do in Paris: he had still further compromised his character by shaking Finot's hand, and not rejecting Blondet's affection.

Every man who has dabbled, or still dabbles, in journalism is under the painful necessity of bowing to men he despises, of smiling at his dearest foe, of compounding the foulest meanness, of soiling his fingers to pay his aggressors in their own coin. He becomes used to seeing evil done, and passing it over; he begins by condoning it, and ends by committing it. In the long run the soul, constantly stained by shameful and perpetual compromise, sinks lower, the spring of noble thoughts grows rusty, the hinges of familiarity wear easy, and turn of their own accord. Alceste becomes Philinte, natures lose their firmness, talents are perverted, faith in great deeds evaporates. The man who yearned to be proud of his work wastes himself in rubbishy articles which his conscience regards, sooner or later, as so many evil actions. He started, like Lousteau or Vernou, to be a great writer; he finds himself a feeble scrivener. Hence it is impossible to honour too highly men whose character stands as high as their talent—men like d'Arthez, who know how to walk sure-footed across the reefs of literary life.

Lucien could make no reply to Blondet's flattery; his wit had an irresistible charm for him, and he maintained the hold of the corrupter over his pupil; besides, he held

a position in the world through his connection with the Comtesse de Montcornet.

'Has an uncle left you a fortune?' said Finot, laughing at him.

'Like you, I have marked some fools for cutting down,' replied Lucien in the same tone.

'Then Monsieur has a review—a newspaper of his own?' Andoche Finot retorted, with the impertinent presumption of a chief to a subordinate.

'I have something better,' replied Lucien, whose vanity, nettled by the assumed superiority of his editor, restored him to the sense of his new position.

'What is that, my dear boy?'

'I have a party.'

'There is a Lucien party?' said Vernou, smiling.

'Finot, the boy has left you in the lurch; I told you he would. Lucien is a clever fellow, and you never were respectful to him. You used him as a hack. Repent, blockhead!' said Blondet.

Blondet, as sharp as a needle, could detect more than one secret in Lucien's air and manner; while stroking him down, he contrived to tighten the curb. He meant to know the reasons of Lucien's return to Paris, his projects, and his means of living.

'On your knees to a superiority you can never attain to, albeit you are Finot!' he went on. 'Admit this gentleman forthwith to be one of the great men to whom the future belongs; he is one of us! So witty and so handsome, can he fail to succeed by your *quibuscumque viis*? Here he stands, in his good Milan armour, his strong sword half unsheathed, and his pennon flying! —Bless me, Lucien, where did you steal that smart waistcoat? Love alone can find such stuff as that. Have you an address? At this moment I am anxious to know where my friends are domiciled; I don't know where to sleep. Finot has turned me out of doors for the night, under the vulgar pretext of "a lady in the case."'

'My boy,' said Lucien, 'I put into practice a motto by which you may secure a quiet life: *Fuge, late, tace*. I am off.'

'But I am not off till you pay me a sacred debt—that little supper, you know, heh?' said Blondet, who was rather too much given to good cheer, and got himself treated when he was out of funds.

'What supper?' asked Lucien, with a little stamp of impatience.

'You don't remember? In that I recognise my prosperous friend; he has lost his memory.'

'He knows what he owes us; I will go bail for his good heart,' said Finot, taking up Blondet's joke.

'Rastignac,' said Blondet, taking the young dandy by the arm as he came up the room to the column where the so-called friends were standing. 'There is a supper in the wind; you will join us—unless,' he added gravely, turning to Lucien, 'Monsieur persists in ignoring a debt of honour. He can.'

'Monsieur de Rubempré is incapable of such a thing; I will answer for him,' said Rastignac, who never dreamed of a practical joke.

'And there is Bixiou, he will come too,' cried Blondet; 'there is no fun without him. Without him champagne cloys my tongue, and I find everything insipid, even the pepper of satire.'

'My friends,' said Bixiou, 'I see you have gathered round the wonder of the day. Our dear Lucien has revived the Metamorphoses of Ovid. Just as the gods used to turn into strange vegetables and other things to seduce the ladies, he has turned the Chardon (the Thistle) into a gentleman to bewitch—whom? Charles x.!—My dear boy,' he went on, holding Lucien by his coat button, 'a journalist who apes the fine gentleman deserves rough music. In their place,' said the merciless jester, as he pointed to Finot and Vernou, 'I should take you up in my society paper; you would bring in a hundred francs for ten columns of fun.'

'Bixiou,' said Blondet, 'an Amphitryon is sacred for twenty-four hours before the feast and twelve hours after. Our illustrious friend is giving us a supper.'

'What then!' cried Bixiou; 'what is more imperative than the duty of saving a great name from oblivion, of endowing the indigent aristocracy with a man of talent? Lucien, you enjoy the esteem of the press of which you were a distinguished ornament, and we will give you our support.—Finot, a paragraph in the "latest items"! —Blondet, a little butter on the fourth page of your paper!—We must advertise the appearance of the finest book of the age, *l'Archer de Charles IX.*! We will appeal to Dauriat to bring out as soon as possible *les Marguerites*, those divine sonnets by the French Petrarch! We must carry our friend through on the shield of stamped paper by which reputations are made and unmade.'

'If you want a supper,' said Lucien to Blondet, hoping to rid himself of this mob, which threatened to increase, 'it seems to me that you need not work up hyperbole and parable to attack an old friend as if he were a booby. To-morrow night at Lointier's——' he cried, seeing a woman come by, whom he rushed to meet.

'Oh! oh! oh!' said Bixiou on three notes, with a mocking glance, and seeming to recognise the mask to whom Lucien addressed himself. 'This needs confirmation.'

He followed the handsome pair, got past them, examined them keenly, and came back, to the great satisfaction of all the envious crowd, who were eager to learn the source of Lucien's change of fortune.

'Friends,' said Bixiou, 'you have long known the goddess of the Sire de Rubempré's fortune: She is des Lupeaulx's former "rat."'

A form of dissipation, now forgotten, but still customary at the beginning of this century, was the keeping of 'rats.' The 'rat'—a slang word that has

become old-fashioned—was a girl of ten or twelve in the chorus of some theatre, more particularly at the opera, who was trained by young *roués* to vice and infamy. A 'rat' was a sort of demon page, a tomboy who was forgiven a trick if it were but funny. The 'rat' might take what she pleased; she was to be watched like a dangerous animal, and she brought an element of liveliness into life, like Scapin, Sganarelle, and Frontin in old-fashioned comedy. But a 'rat' was too expensive; it made no return in honour, profit, or pleasure; the fashion of rats so completely went out, that in these days few people knew anything of this detail of fashionable life before the Restoration till certain writers took up the 'rat' as a new subject.

'What! after having seen Coralie killed under him, Lucien means to rob us of La Torpille?' (the torpedo fish) said Blondet.

As he heard the name the brawny mask gave a significant start, which, though repressed, was understood by Rastignac.

'It is out of the question,' replied Finot; 'La Torpille has not a sou to give away; Nathan tells me she borrowed a thousand francs of Florine.'

'Come, gentlemen, gentlemen!' said Rastignac, anxious to defend Lucien against so odious an imputation.

'Well,' cried Vernou, 'is Coralie's kept man likely to be so very particular?'

'Oh!' replied Bixiou, 'those thousand francs prove to me that our friend Lucien lives with La Torpille——'

'What an irreparable loss to literature, science, art, and politics!' exclaimed Blondet. 'La Torpille is the only common prostitute in whom I ever found the stuff for a superior courtesan; she has not been spoiled by education—she can neither read nor write, she would have understood us. We might have given to our era one of those magnificent Aspasias without which there

can be no golden age. See how admirably Madame du Barry was suited to the eighteenth century, Ninon de l'Enclos to the seventeenth, Marion Delorme to the sixteenth, Impéria to the fifteenth, Flora to Republican Rome, which she made her heir, and which paid off the public debt with her fortune! What would Horace be without Lydia, Tibullus without Delia, Catullus without Lesbia, Propertius without Cynthia, Demetrius without Lamia, who is his glory at this day?'

'Blondet talking of Demetrius in the opera house seems to me rather too strong of the *Débats*,' said Bixiou in his neighbour's ears.

'And where would the empire of the Cæsars have been but for these queens?' Blondet went on; 'Laïs and Rhodope are Greece and Egypt. They all indeed are the poetry of the ages in which they lived. This poetry, which Napoleon lacked—for the Widow of his Great Army is a barrack jest, was not wanting to the Revolution; it had Madame Tallien! In these days there is certainly a throne to let in France which is for her who can fill it. We among us could make a queen. I should have given La Torpille an aunt, for her mother is too decidedly dead on the field of dishonour; du Tillet would have given her a mansion, Lousteau a carriage, Rastignac her footmen, des Lupeaulx a cook, Finot her hats'—Finot could not suppress a shrug at standing the point-blank fire of this epigram—'Vernou would have composed her advertisements, and Bixiou her repartees! The aristocracy would have come to enjoy themselves with our Ninon, where we would have got artists together, under pain of death by newspaper articles. Ninon the second would have been magnificently impertinent, overwhelming in luxury. She would have set up opinions. Some prohibited dramatic masterpiece should have been read in her drawing-room; it should have been written on purpose if necessary. She would not have been liberal; a courtesan is essentially

monarchical. Oh what a loss! She ought to have embraced her whole century, and she makes love with a little young man! Lucien will make a sort of hunting-dog of her.'

'None of the female powers of whom you speak ever trudged the streets,' said Finot, 'and that pretty little "rat" has rolled in the mire.'

'Like a lily-seed in the soil,' replied Vernou, 'and she has improved in it and flowered. Hence her superiority. Must we not have known everything to be able to create the laughter and joy which are part of everything?'

'He is right,' said Lousteau, who had hitherto listened without speaking; 'La Torpille can laugh and make others laugh. That gift of all great writers and great actors is proper to those who have investigated every social deep. At eighteen that girl has already known the greatest wealth, the most squalid misery—men of every degree. She bears about her a sort of magic wand by which she lets loose the brutal appetites so vehemently suppressed in men who still have a heart while occupied with politics or science, literature or art. There is not in Paris another woman who can say to the beast as she does: "Come out!" And the beast leaves his lair and wallows in excesses. She feeds you up to the chin, she helps you to drink and smoke. In short, this woman is the salt of which Rabelais writes, which, thrown on matter, animates it and elevates it to the marvellous realms of art; her robe displays unimagined splendour, her fingers drop gems as her lips shed smiles; she gives the spirit of the occasion to every little thing; her chatter twinkles with bright sayings, she has the secret of the quaintest onomatopœia, full of colour, and giving colour; she——'

'You are wasting five francs' worth of copy,' said Bixiou, interrupting Lousteau. 'La Torpille is something far better than all that; you have all been in love with her more or less, not one of you can say that she

ever was his mistress. She can always command you; you will never command her. You may force your way in and ask her to do you a service——'

'Oh, she is more generous than a brigand chief who knows his business, and more devoted than the best of school-fellows,' said Blondet. 'You may trust her with your purse or your secrets. But what made me choose her as queen is her Bourbon-like indifference for a fallen favourite.'

'She, like her mother, is much too dear,' said des Lupeaulx. 'The handsome Dutch woman would have swallowed up the income of the Archbishop of Toledo; she ate two notaries out of house and home——'

'And kept Maxime de Trailles when he was a court page,' said Bixiou.

'La Torpille is too dear, as Raphael was, or Carême, or Taglioni, or Lawrence, or Boule, or any artist of genius is too dear,' said Blondet.

'Esther never looked so thoroughly a lady,' said Rastignac, pointing to the masked figure to whom Lucien had given his arm. 'I will bet on its being Madame de Sérizy.'

'Not a doubt of it,' cried du Châtelet, 'and Monsieur de Rubempré's fortune is accounted for.'

'Ah, the Church knows how to choose its Levites; what a sweet ambassador's secretary he will make!' remarked des Lupeaulx.

'All the more so,' Rastignac went on, 'because Lucien is a really clever fellow. These gentlemen have had proof of it more than once,' and he turned to Blondet, Finot, and Lousteau.

'Yes, the boy is cut out of the right stuff to get on,' said Lousteau, who was dying of jealousy. 'And particularly because he has what we call independent ideas . . .'

'It is you who trained him,' said Vernou.

'Well,' replied Bixiou, looking at des Lupeaulx, 'I

trust to the memory of Monsieur the Secretary-General and Master of Appeals—that mask is La Torpille, and I will stand a supper on it.'

'I will hold the stakes,' said du Châtelet, curious to know the truth.

'Come, des Lupeaulx,' said Finot, 'try to identify your rat's ears.'

'There is no need for committing the crime of treason against a mask,' replied Bixiou. 'La Torpille and Lucien must pass us as they go up the room again, and I pledge myself to prove that it is she.'

'So our friend Lucien has come above water once more,' said Nathan, joining the group. 'I thought he had gone back to Angoumois for the rest of his days. Has he discovered some secret to ruin the English ?'

'He has done what you will not do in a hurry,' retorted Rastignac ; 'he has paid up.'

The burly mask nodded in confirmation.

'A man who has sown his wild oats at his age puts himself out of court. He has no pluck ; he puts money in the funds,' replied Nathan.

'Oh, that youngster will always be a fine gentleman, and will always have such lofty notions as will place him far above many men who think themselves his betters,' replied Rastignac.

At this moment journalists, dandies, and idlers were all examining the charming subject of their bet as horse-dealers examine a horse for sale. These connoisseurs, grown old in familiarity with every form of Parisian depravity, all men of superior talent each his own way, equally corrupt, equally corrupting, all given over to unbridled ambition, accustomed to assume and to guess everything, had their eyes centred on a masked woman, a woman whom no one else could identify. They, and certain habitual frequenters of the opera balls, could alone recognise under the long shroud of the black domino the hood and falling ruff which make the wearer

unrecognisable, the rounded form, the individuality of figure and gait, the sway of the waist, the carriage of the head—the most intangible trifles to ordinary eyes, but to them the easiest to discern.

In spite of this shapeless wrapper they could watch the most appealing of dramas, that of a woman inspired by a genuine passion. Were she La Torpille, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, or Madame de Sérizy, on the lowest or highest rung of the social ladder, this woman was an exquisite creature, a flash from happy dreams. These old young men, like these young old men, felt so keen an emotion, that they envied Lucien the splendid privilege of working such a metamorphosis of a woman into a goddess. The mask was there as though she had been alone with Lucien; for that woman the thousand other persons did not exist, nor the evil and dust-laden atmosphere; no, she moved under the celestial vault of love, as Raphael's Madonnas under their slender oval glory. She did not feel herself elbowed; the fire of her glance shot from the holes in her mask and sank into Lucien's eyes; the thrill of her frame seemed to answer to every movement of her companion. Whence comes this flame that radiates from a woman in love and distinguishes her above all others? Whence that sylph-like lightness which seems to negative the laws of gravitation? Is the soul become ambient? Has happiness a physical effluence?

The ingenuousness of a girl, the graces of a child were discernible under the domino. Though they walked apart, these two beings suggested the figures of Flora and Zephyr as we see them grouped by the cleverest sculptors; but they were beyond sculpture, the greatest of the arts; Lucien and his pretty domino were more like the angels busied with flowers or birds, which Gian Bellini has placed beneath the effigies of the Virgin Mother. Lucien and this girl belonged to the realm of fancy, which is as far above art as cause is above effect.

When the domino, forgetful of everything, was within a yard of the group, Bixiou exclaimed—

'Esther!'

The unhappy girl turned her head quickly as hearing herself called, recognised the mischievous speaker, and bowed her head like a dying creature that has drawn its last breath.

A sharp laugh followed, and the group of men melted among the crowd like a knot of frightened field-rats whisking into their holes by the roadside. Rastignac alone went no further than was necessary, just to avoid making any show of shunning Lucien's flashing eye. He could thus note two phases of distress equally deep though unconfessed; first, the hapless Torpille, stricken as by a lightning stroke, and then the inscrutable mask, the only one of the group who had remained. Esther murmured a word in Lucien's ear just as her knees gave way, and Lucien, supporting her, led her away.

Rastignac watched the pretty pair, lost in meditation.

'How did she get her name of La Torpille?' asked a gloomy voice that struck to his vitals, for it was no longer disguised.

'*He* again—he has made his escape!' muttered Rastignac to himself.

'Be silent or I murder you,' replied the mask, changing his voice. 'I am satisfied with you, you have kept your word, and there is more than one arm ready to serve you. Henceforth be as silent as the grave; but, before that, answer my question.'

'Well, the girl is such a witch that she could have magnetised the Emperor Napoleon; she could magnetise a man more difficult to influence—you yourself,' replied Rastignac, and he turned to go.

'One moment,' said the mask; 'I will prove to you that you have never seen me anywhere.'

The speaker took his mask off; for a moment

Rastignac hesitated, recognising nothing of the hideous being he had known formerly at Madame Vauquer's.

'The devil has enabled you to change in every particular, excepting your eyes, which it is impossible to forget,' said he.

The iron hand gripped his arm to enjoin eternal secrecy.

At three in the morning des Lupeaulx and Finot found the elegant Rastignac on the same spot, leaning against the column where the terrible mask had left him. Rastignac had confessed to himself; he had been at once priest and penitent, culprit and judge. He allowed himself to be led away to breakfast, and reached home perfectly tipsy, but taciturn.

The Rue de Langlade and the adjacent streets are a blot on the Palais Royal and the Rue de Rivoli. This portion of one of the handsomest quarters of Paris will long retain the stain of foulness left by the hillocks formed of the middens of old Paris, on which mills formerly stood. These narrow streets, dark and muddy, where such industries are carried on as care little for appearances, wear at night an aspect of mystery full of contrasts. On coming from the well-lighted regions of the Rue Saint-Honoré, the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and the Rue de Richelieu, where the crowd is constantly pushing, where glitter the masterpieces of industry, fashion and art, every man to whom Paris by night is unknown would feel a sense of dread and melancholy, on finding himself in the labyrinth of little streets which lie round that blaze of light reflected even from the sky. Dense blackness is here, instead of floods of gaslight; a dim oil-lamp here and there sheds its doubtful and smoky gleam, and many blind alleys are not lighted at all. Foot passengers are few, and walk fast. The shops are shut, the few that are open are of a squalid kind; a dirty, unlighted wineshop, or a seller

of underclothing and eau-de-Cologne. An unwholesome chill lays a clammy cloak over your shoulders. Few carriages drive past. There are sinister places here, especially the Rue de Langlade, the entrance to the Passage Saint-Guillaume, and the turnings of some streets.

The municipal council has not yet been able to purge this vast lazar-place, for prostitution long since made it its headquarters. It is, perhaps, a good thing for Paris that these alleys should be allowed to preserve their filthy aspect. Passing through them by day, it is impossible to imagine what they become by night; they are pervaded by strange creatures of no known world; white, half-naked forms cling to the walls—the darkness is alive. Between the passenger and the wall a dress steals by—a dress that moves and speaks. Half-open doors suddenly shout with laughter. Words fall on the ear such as Rabelais speaks of as frozen and melting. Snatches of songs come up from the pavement. The noise is not vague; it means something. When it is hoarse it is a voice; but if it suggests a song, there is nothing human about it, it is more like a croak. Often you hear a sharp whistle, and then the tap of boot-heels has a peculiarly aggressive and mocking ring. This medley of things makes you giddy. Atmospheric conditions are reversed there—it is warm in winter and cool in summer.

Still, whatever the weather, this strange world always wears the same aspect; it is the fantastic world of Hoffmann of Berlin. The most mathematical of clerks never thinks of it as real, after returning through the straits that lead into decent streets, where there are passengers, shops, and taverns. Modern administration, or modern policy, more scornful or more shamefaced than the queens and kings of past ages, no longer dare look boldly in the face of this plague of our capitals. Measures, of course, must change with the times, and

such as bear on individuals and on their liberty are a ticklish matter; still, we ought, perhaps, to show some breadth and boldness as to merely material measures—air, light, and construction. The moralist, the artist, and the sage administrator alike must regret the old wooden galleries of the Palais Royal, where the lambs were to be seen who will always be found where there are loungers; and is it not best that the loungers should go where they are to be found? What is the consequence? The gayest parts of the Boulevards, that delightfulest of promenades, are impossible in the evening for a family party. The police has failed to take advantage of the outlet afforded by some small streets to purge the main street.

The girl whom we have seen crushed by a word at the opera ball had been for the last month or two living in the Rue de Langlade, in a very poor-looking house. This structure, stuck on to the wall of an enormously large one, badly stuccoed, of no depth, and immensely high, has all its windows on the street, and bears some resemblance to a parrot's perch. On each floor are two rooms, let as separate flats. There is a narrow staircase clinging to the wall, queerly lighted by windows which mark its ascent on the outer wall, each landing being indicated by a sink, one of the most odious peculiarities of Paris. The shop and *entresol* at that time were tenanted by a tinman; the landlord occupied the first floor; the four upper stories were rented by very decent working girls, who were treated by the portress and the proprietor with some consideration and an obligingness called forth by the difficulty of letting a house so oddly constructed and situated. The occupants of the quarter are accounted for by the existence there of many houses of the same character, for which trade has no use, and which can only be rented by the poorer kinds of industry, of a precarious or ignominious nature.

At three in the afternoon the portress, who had seen

Mademoiselle Esther brought home half dead by a young man at two in the morning, had just held council with the young woman of the floor above, who, before setting out in a cab to join some party of pleasure, had expressed her uneasiness about Esther; she had not heard her move. Esther was, no doubt, still asleep, but this slumber seemed suspicious. The portress, alone in her cell, was regretting that she could not go to see what was happening on the fourth floor, where Mademoiselle Esther lodged.

Just as she had made up her mind to leave the tinman's son in charge of her room, a sort of den in a recess on the *entresol* floor, a cab stopped at the door. A man stepped out, wrapped from head to foot in a cloak evidently intended to conceal his dress or his rank in life, and asked for Mademoiselle Esther. The portress at once felt relieved; this accounted for Esther's silence and quietude. As the stranger mounted the stairs above the portress's room, she noticed silver buckles in his shoes, and fancied she caught sight of the black fringe of a priest's sash; she went downstairs and catechised the driver, who answered without speech, and again the woman understood.

The priest knocked, received no answer, heard a slight gasp, and forced the door open with a thrust of his shoulder; charity, no doubt, lent him strength, but in any one else it would have been ascribed to practice. He rushed to the inner room, and there found poor Esther in front of an image of the Virgin in painted plaster, kneeling, or rather doubled up, on the floor, her hands folded. The girl was dying. A brazier of burnt charcoal told the tale of that dreadful morning. The domino cloak and hood were lying on the ground. The bed was undisturbed. The unhappy creature, stricken to the heart by a mortal thrust, had, no doubt, made all her arrangements on her return from the opera. A candle-wick, collapsed in the pool of grease that filled

the candle-sconce, showed how completely her last meditations had absorbed her. A handkerchief soaked with tears proved the sincerity of the Magdalen's despair, while her classic attitude was that of the irreligious courtesan. This abject repentance made the priest smile.

Esther, unskilled in dying, had left the door open, not thinking that the air of two rooms would need a larger amount of charcoal to make it suffocating; she was only stunned by the fumes; the fresh air from the staircase gradually restored her to a consciousness of her woes.

The priest remained standing, lost in gloomy meditation, without being touched by the girl's divine beauty, watching her first movements as if she had been some animal. His eyes went from the crouching figure to the surrounding objects with evident indifference. He looked at the furniture in the room; the paved floor, red, polished, and cold, was poorly covered with a shabby carpet worn to the string. A little bedstead, of painted wood and old-fashioned shape, was hung with yellow cotton printed with red stars; one armchair and two small chairs, also of painted wood, and covered with the same cotton print of which the window-curtains were also made; a grey wall-paper sprigged with flowers, blackened and greasy with age; a fireplace full of kitchen utensils of the vilest kind, two bundles of fire-logs; a stone shelf, on which lay some jewellery false and real, a pair of scissors, a dirty pincushion, and some white, scented gloves; an exquisite hat perched on the water-jug, a Ternaux shawl stopping a hole in the window, a handsome gown hanging from a nail; a little hard sofa, with no cushions; broken clogs and dainty slippers, boots that a queen might have coveted; cheap china plates, cracked or chipped, with fragments of a past meal, and nickel forks—the plate of the Paris poor; a basket full of potatoes and dirty linen, with a smart gauze cap

on the top ; a rickety wardrobe, with a glass door, open and empty, and on the shelves sundry pawntickets,—this was the medley of things, dismal or pleasing, abject and handsome, that fell on his eye.

These relics of splendour among the potsherds, these household belongings—so appropriate to the bohemian existence of the girl who knelt stricken in her unbuttoned garments, like a horse dying in harness under the broken shafts entangled in the reins—did the whole strange scene suggest any thoughts to the priest ? Did he say to himself that this erring creature must at least be disinterested to live in such poverty when her lover was young and rich ? Did he ascribe the disorder of the room to the disorder of her life ? Did he feel pity or terror ? Was his charity moved ?

To see him, his arms folded, his brow dark, his lips set, his eye harsh, any one must have supposed him absorbed in morose feelings of hatred, considerations that jostled each other, sinister schemes. He was certainly insensible to the soft roundness of a bosom almost crushed under the weight of the bowed shoulders, and to the beautiful modelling of the crouching Venus that was visible under the black petticoat, so closely was the dying girl curled up. The drooping head which, seen from behind, showed the white, slender, flexible neck and the fine shoulders of a well-developed figure, did not appeal to him. He did not raise Esther, he did not seem to hear the agonising gasps which showed that she was returning to life ; a fearful sob and a terrifying glance from the girl were needed before he condescended to lift her, and he carried her to the bed with an ease that revealed enormous strength.

'Lucien !' she murmured.

'Love is there, the woman is not far behind,' said the priest with some bitterness.

The victim of Parisian depravity then observed the dress worn by her deliverer, and said, with a smile like

a child's when it takes possession of something longed for—

'Then I shall not die without being reconciled to Heaven?'

'You may yet expiate your sins,' said the priest, moistening her forehead with water, and making her smell at a cruet of vinegar he found in a corner.

'I feel that life, instead of departing, is rushing in on me,' said she, after accepting the Father's care and expressing her gratitude by simple gestures. This engaging pantomime, such as the Graces might have used to charm, perfectly justified the nickname given to this strange girl.

'Do you feel better?' said the priest, giving her a glass of sugar and water to drink.

This man seemed accustomed to such queer establishments; he knew all about it. He was quite at home there. This privilege of being everywhere at home is the prerogative of kings, courtesans, and thieves.

'When you feel quite well,' this strange priest went on after a pause, 'you must tell me the reasons which prompted you to commit this last crime, this attempted suicide.'

'My story is very simple, Father,' replied she. 'Three months ago I was living the evil life to which I was born. I was the lowest and vilest of creatures; now I am only the most unhappy. Excuse me from telling you the history of my poor mother, who was murdered——'

'By a Captain, in a house of ill-fame,' said the priest, interrupting the penitent. 'I know your origin, and I know that if a being of your sex can ever be excused for leading a life of shame, it is you, who have always lacked good examples.'

'Alas! I was never baptized, and have had no religious teaching.'

'All may yet be remedied then,' replied the priest,

'provided that your faith, your repentance, are sincere and without ulterior motive.'

'Lucien and God fill my heart,' said she with ingenuous pathos.

'You might have said God and Lucien,' answered the priest, smiling. 'You remind me of the purpose of my visit. Omit nothing that concerns that young man.'

'You have come from him?' she asked, with a tender look that would have touched any other priest! 'Oh, he thought I should do it!'

'No,' replied the priest; 'it is not your death, but your life that we are interested in. Come, explain your position towards each other.'

'In one word,' said she.

The poor child quaked at the priest's stern tone, but as a woman quakes who has long ceased to be surprised at brutality.

'Lucien is Lucien,' said she, 'the handsomest young man, the kindest soul alive; if you know him, my love must seem to you quite natural. I met him by chance, three months ago, at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, where I went one day when I had leave, for we had a day a week at Madame Meynardie's, where I then was. Next day, you understand, I went out without leave. Love had come into my heart, and had so completely changed me, that on my return from the theatre I did not know myself: I had a horror of myself. Lucien would never have known. Instead of telling him what I was, I gave him my address at these rooms, where a friend of mine was then living, who was so kind as to give them up to me. I swear on my sacred word——'

'You must not swear.'

'Is it swearing to give your sacred word?—Well, from that day I have worked in this room like a lost creature at shirt-making at twenty-eight sous apiece, so as to live by honest labour. For a month I have had nothing to eat but potatoes, that I might keep myself a

good girl and worthy of Lucien, who loves me and respects me as a pattern of virtue. I have made my declaration before the police to recover my rights, and submitted to two years' surveillance. They are ready enough to enter your name on the lists of disgrace, but make every difficulty about scratching it out again. All I asked of Heaven was to enable me to keep my resolution.

'I shall be nineteen in the month of April; at my age there is still a chance. It seems to me that I was never born till three months ago.—I prayed to God every morning that Lucien might never know what my former life had been. I bought that Virgin you see there, and I prayed to her in my own way, for I do not know any prayers; I cannot read nor write, and I have never been into a church; I have never seen anything of God excepting in processions, out of curiosity.'

'And what do you say to the Virgin?'

'I talk to her as I talk to Lucien, with all my soul, till I make him cry.'

'Oh, so he cries?'

'With joy,' said she eagerly, 'poor dear boy! We understand each other so well that we have but one soul! He is so nice, so fond, so sweet in heart and mind and manners! He says he is a poet; I say he is god.—Forgive me! You priests, you see, don't know what love is. But, in fact, only girls like me know enough of men to appreciate such as Lucien. A Lucien, you see, is as rare as a woman without sin. When you come across him you can love no one else; so there! But such a being must have his fellow; so I want to be worthy to be loved by my Lucien. That is where my trouble began. Last evening, at the opera, I was recognised by some young men who have no more feeling than a tiger has pity—for that matter, I could come round the tiger! The veil of innocence I had tried to wear was torn off; their laughter pierced my brain and my heart. Do not think you have saved me; I shall die of grief.'

'Your veil of innocence?' said the priest. 'Then you have treated Lucien with the sternest severity?'

'Oh, Father, how can you, who know him, ask me such a question!' she replied with a smile. 'Who can resist a god?'

'Do not be blasphemous,' said the priest mildly. 'No one can be like God. Exaggeration is out of place with true love; you had not a pure and genuine love for your idol. If you had undergone the conversion you boast of having felt, you would have acquired the virtues which are a part of womanhood; you would have known the charm of chastity, the refinements of modesty, the two virtues that are the glory of a maiden.—You do not love.'

Esther's gesture of horror was seen by the priest, but it had no effect on the impassibility of her confessor.

'Yes; for you love him for yourself and not for himself, for the temporal enjoyments that delight you, and not for love itself. If he has thus taken possession of you, you cannot have felt that sacred thrill that is inspired by a being on whom God has set the seal of the most adorable perfections. Has it never occurred to you that you would degrade him by your past impurity, that you would corrupt a child by the overpowering seductions which earned you your nickname glorious in infamy? You have been illogical with yourself, and your passion of a day——'

'Of a day?' she repeated, raising her eyes.

'By what other name can you call a love that is not eternal, that does not unite us in the future life of the Christian, to the being we love?'

'Ah, I will be a Catholic!' she cried in a hollow, vehement tone, that would have earned her the mercy of the Lord.

'Can a girl who has received neither the baptism of the Church nor that of knowledge; who can neither read, nor write, nor pray; who cannot take a step with-

out the stones in the street rising up to accuse her ; noteworthy only for the fugitive gift of beauty which sickness may destroy to-morrow ; can such a vile, degraded creature, fully aware too of her degradation—for if you had been ignorant of it and less devoted, you would have been more excusable—can the intended victim to suicide and hell hope to be the wife of Lucien de Rubempré ? '

Every word was a poniard thrust piercing the depths of her heart. At every word the louder sobs and abundant tears of the desperate girl showed the power with which light had flashed upon an intelligence as pure as that of a savage, upon a soul at length aroused, upon a nature over which depravity had laid a sheet of foul ice now thawed in the sunshine of faith.

'Why did I not die ! ' was the only thought that found utterance in the midst of a torrent of ideas that racked and ravaged her brain.

'My daughter,' said the terrible judge, 'there is a love which is unconfessed before men, but of which the secret is received by the angels with smiles of gladness.'

'What is that ? '

'Love without hope, when it inspires our life, when it fills us with the spirit of sacrifice, when it ennobles every act by the thought of reaching some ideal perfection. Yes, the angels approve of such love ; it leads to the knowledge of God. To aim at perfection in order to be worthy of the one you love, to make for him a thousand secret sacrifices, adoring him from afar, giving your blood drop by drop, abnegating your self-love, never feeling any pride or anger as regards him, even concealing from him all knowledge of the dreadful jealousy he fires in your heart, giving him all he wishes were it to your own loss, loving what he loves, always turning your face to him to follow him without his knowing it—such love as that religion would have forgiven ; it is no offence to laws human or divine, and would have led you into another road than that of your foul voluptuousness.'

As she heard this horrible verdict, uttered in a word —and such a word! and spoken in such a tone!— Esther's spirit rose up in fairly legitimate distrust. This word was like a thunder-clap giving warning of a storm about to break. She looked at the priest, and felt the grip on her vitals which wrings the bravest when face to face with sudden and imminent danger. No eye could have read what was passing in this man's mind; but the boldest would have found more to quail at than to hope for in the expression of his eyes, once bright and yellow like those of a tiger, but now shrouded, from austerities and privations, with a haze like that which overhangs the horizon in the dog-days, when, though the earth is hot and luminous, the mist makes it indistinct and dim —almost invisible.

The gravity of a Spaniard, the deep furrows which the myriad scars of virulent smallpox made hideously like broken ruts, were ploughed into his face, which was sallow and tanned by the sun. The hardness of this countenance was all the more conspicuous, being framed in the meagre dry wig of a priest who takes no care of his person, a black wig looking rusty in the light. His athletic frame, his hands like an old soldier's, his broad, strong shoulders were those of the Caryatides which the architects of the Middle Ages introduced into some Italian palaces, remotely imitated in those of the front of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre. The least clear-sighted observer might have seen that fiery passions or some unwonted accident must have thrown this man into the bosom of the Church; certainly none but the most tremendous shocks of lightning could have changed him, if indeed such a nature were susceptible of change.

Women who have lived the life that Esther had so violently repudiated come to feel absolute indifference as to the external form of a man. They are like the literary critics of our day, who may be compared with them in some respects, and who feel at last perfect dis-

regard of the formulas of art; they have read so many books, they see so many pass away, they are so much accustomed to written pages, they have gone through so many plots, they have seen so many dramas, they have written so many articles without saying what they meant, and have so often been treasonable to the cause of Art in favour of their personal likings and aversions, that they acquire a feeling of disgust of everything, and yet continue to pass judgment. It needs a miracle to make such a writer produce sound work, just as it needs another miracle to give birth to pure and noble love in the heart of a courtesan.

The tone and manner of this priest, who seemed to have escaped from a picture by Zurbaran, struck this poor girl as so hostile, little as externals affected her, that she perceived herself to be less the object of his solicitude than the instrument he needed for some scheme. Being unable to distinguish between the insinuating tongue of personal interest and the unction of true charity, for we must be acutely awake to recognise false coin when it is offered by a friend, she felt herself, as it were, in the talons of some fierce and monstrous bird of prey who, after hovering over her for long, had pounced down on her; and in her terror she cried in a voice of alarm—

'I thought it was a priest's duty to console us, and you are killing me!'

At this innocent outcry the priest started and paused; he meditated a moment before replying. During that instant the two persons so strangely brought together studied each other cautiously. The priest understood the girl, though the girl could not understand the priest.

He, no doubt, put aside some plan which had threatened the unhappy Esther, and came back to his first ideas.

'We are the physicians of the soul,' said he, in a mild voice, 'and we know what remedies suit their maladies.'

'Much must be forgiven to the wretched,' said Esther.

She fancied she had been wrong; she slipped off the

bed, threw herself at the man's feet, kissed his gown with deep humility, and looked up at him with eyes full of tears.

'I thought I had done so much!' she said.

'Listen, my child. Your terrible reputation has cast Lucien's family into grief. They are afraid, and not without reason, that you may lead him into dissipation, into endless folly——'

'That is true; it was I who got him to the ball to mystify him.'

'You are handsome enough to make him wish to triumph in you in the eyes of the world, to show you with pride, and make you an object for display. And if he wasted money only!—but he will waste his time, his powers; he will lose his inclination for the fine future his friends can secure to him. Instead of being some day an ambassador, rich, admired, and triumphant, he, like so many debauchees who choke their talents in the mud of Paris, will have been the lover of a degraded woman.

'As for you, after rising for a time to the level of a sphere of elegance, you will presently sink back to your former life, for you have not in you the strength bestowed by a good education to enable you to resist vice and think of the future. You would no more be able to break with the women of your own class than you have broken with the men who shamed you at the opera this morning. Lucien's true friends, alarmed by his passion for you, have dogged his steps and know all. Filled with horror, they have sent me to you to sound your views and decide your fate; but though they are powerful enough to clear a stumbling-stone out of the young man's way, they are merciful. Understand this, child: a girl whom Lucien loves has claims on their regard, as a true Christian worships the slough on which, by chance, the divine light falls. I came to be the instrument of a beneficent purpose;—still, if I had found you utterly reprobate, armed with effrontery

and astuteness, corrupt to the marrow, deaf to the voice of repentance, I should have abandoned you to their wrath.

'The release, civil and political, which it is so hard to win, which the police is so right to withhold for a time in the interests of society, and which I heard you long for with all the ardour of true repentance—is here,' said the priest, taking an official-looking paper out of his belt. 'You were seen yesterday, this letter of release is dated to-day. You see how powerful the people are who take an interest in Lucien.'

At the sight of this document Esther was so ingenuously overcome by the convulsive agitation produced by unlooked-for joy, that a fixed smile parted her lips, like that of a crazy creature. The priest paused, looking at the girl to see whether, when once she had lost the horrible strength which corrupt natures find in corruption itself, and was thrown back on her frail and delicate primitive nature, she could endure so much excitement. If she had been a deceitful courtesan, Esther would have acted a part; but now that she was innocent and herself once more, she might perhaps die, as a blind man cured may lose his sight again if he is exposed to too bright a light. At this moment this man looked into the very depths of human nature, but his calmness was terrible in its rigidity; a cold alp, snow-bound and near to heaven, impenetrable and frowning, with flanks of granite, and yet beneficent.

Such women are essentially impressionable beings, passing without reason from the most idiotic distrust to absolute confidence. In this respect they are lower than animals. Extreme in everything—in their joy and despair, in their religion and irreligion—they would almost all go mad if they were not decimated by the mortality peculiar to their class, and if happy chances did not lift one now and then from the slough in which they dwell. To understand the very depths of the wretchedness of this horrible existence, one must know how far

in madness a creature can go without remaining there, by studying La Torpille's violent ecstasy at the priest's feet. The poor girl gazed at the paper of release with an expression which Dante has overlooked, and which surpassed the inventiveness of his Inferno. But a reaction came with tears. Esther rose, threw her arms round the priest's neck, laid her head on his breast, which she wetted with her weeping, kissing the coarse stuff that covered that heart of steel as if she fain would touch it. She seized hold of him ; she covered his hands with kisses ; she poured out in a sacred effusion of gratitude her most coaxing caresses, lavished fond names on him, saying again and again in the midst of her honeyed words, 'Let me have it!' in a thousand different tones of voice ; she wrapped him in tenderness, covered him with her looks with a swiftness that found him defenceless ; at last she charmed away his wrath.

The priest perceived how well the girl had deserved her nickname ; he understood how difficult it was to resist this bewitching creature ; he suddenly comprehended Lucien's love, and just what must have fascinated the poet. Such a passion hides among a thousand temptations a dart-like hook which is most apt to catch the lofty soul of an artist. These passions, inexplicable to the vulgar, are perfectly accounted for by the thirst for ideal beauty, which is characteristic of a creative mind. For are we not, in some degree, akin to the angels, whose task it is to bring the guilty to a better mind? are we not creative when we purify such a creature? How delightful it is to harmonise moral with physical beauty! What joy and pride if we succeed! How noble a task is that which has no instrument but love!

Such alliances, made famous by the example of Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Alcibiades, Cethegus, and Pompey, and yet so monstrous in the eyes of the vulgar, are based on the same feeling that prompted Louis XIV. to build Versailles, or that makes men rush

into any ruinous enterprise—into converting the miasma of a marsh into a mass of fragrance surrounded by living waters; placing a lake at the top of a hill, as the Prince de Conti did at Nointel; or producing Swiss scenery at Cassan, like Bergeret, the farmer-general. In short, it is the application of art in the realm of morals.

The priest, ashamed of having yielded to this weakness, hastily pushed Esther away, and she sat down quite abashed, for he said—

'You are still the courtesan.' And he calmly replaced the paper in his sash.

Esther, like a child who has a single wish in its head, kept her eyes fixed on the spot where the document lay hidden.

'My child,' the priest went on after a pause, 'your mother was a Jewess, and you have not been baptized; but, on the other hand, you have never been taken to the synagogue. You are in the limbo where little children are——'

'Little children!' she echoed, in a tenderly pathetic tone.

'As you are on the books of the police, a cipher outside the pale of social beings,' the priest went on, unmoved. 'If love, seen as it swept past, led you to believe three months' since that you were then born, you must feel that since that day you have been really an infant. You must, therefore, be led as if you were a child; you must be completely changed, and I will undertake to make you unrecognisable. To begin with, you must forget Lucien.'

The words crushed the poor girl's heart; she raised her eyes to the priest and shook her head; she could not speak, finding the executioner in the deliverer again.

'At any rate, you must give up seeing him,' he went on. 'I will take you to a religious house where young girls of the best families are educated; there you will become a Catholic, you will be trained in the practice of Christian exercises, you will be taught religion. You may come out an accomplished young lady, chaste, pure,

well brought up, if——' The man lifted up a finger and paused.

'If,' he went on, 'you feel brave enough to leave the "Torpille" behind you here.'

'Ah!' cried the poor thing, to whom each word had been like a note of some melody to which the gates of Paradise were slowly opening. 'Ah! if it were possible to shed all my blood here and have it renewed!'

'Listen to me.'

She was silent.

'Your future fate depends on your power of forgetting. Think of the extent to which you pledge yourself. A word, a gesture, which betrays La Torpille will kill Lucien's wife. A word murmured in a dream, an involuntary thought, an immodest glance, a gesture of impatience, a reminiscence of dissipation, an omission, a shake of the head that might reveal what you know, or what is known about you for your woes——'

'Yes, yes, Father,' said the girl, with the exaltation of a saint. 'To walk in shoes of red-hot iron and smile, to live in a pair of stays set with nails and maintain the grace of a dancer, to eat bread salted with ashes, to drink wormwood,—all will be sweet and easy!'

She fell again on her knees, she kissed the priest's shoes, she melted into tears that wetted them, she clasped his knees, and clung to them, murmuring foolish words as she wept for joy. Her long and beautiful light hair waved to the ground, a sort of carpet under the feet of the celestial messenger, whom she saw as gloomy and hard as ever when she lifted herself up and looked at him.

'What have I done to offend you?' cried she, quite frightened. 'I have heard of a woman, such as I am, who washed the feet of Jesus with perfumes. Alas! virtue has made me so poor that I have nothing but tears to offer you.'

'Have you not understood?' he answered, in a cruel

voice. 'I tell you, you must be able to come out of the house to which I shall take you so completely changed, physically and morally, that no man or woman you have ever known will be able to call you "Esther" and make you look round. Yesterday your love could not give you strength enough so completely to bury the prostitute that she could never reappear; and again to-day she revives in adoration which is due to none but God.'

'Was it not He who sent you to me?' said she.

'If during the course of your education you should even see Lucien, all would be lost,' he went on; 'remember that.'

'Who will comfort him?' said she.

'What was it that you comforted him for?' asked the priest, in a tone in which, for the first time during this scene, there was a nervous quaver.

'I do not know; he was often sad when he came.'

'Sad!' said the priest. 'Did he tell you why?'

'Never,' answered she.

'He was sad at loving such a girl as you!' exclaimed he.

'Alas! and well he might be,' said she, with deep humility. 'I am the most despicable creature of my sex, and I could find favour in his eyes only by the greatness of my love.'

'That love must give you the courage to obey me blindly. If I were to take you straight from hence to the house where you are to be educated, everybody here would tell Lucien that you had gone away to-day, Sunday, with a priest; he might follow in your tracks. In the course of a week, the portress, not seeing me again, might suppose me to be what I am not. So, one evening—this day week—at seven o'clock, go out quietly and get into a cab that will be waiting for you at the bottom of the Rue des Frondeurs. During this week avoid Lucien, find excuses, have him sent from the door, and if he should come in, go up to some friend's room. I shall

know if you have seen him, and in that event all will be at an end. I shall not even come back. These eight days you will need to make up some suitable clothing and to hide your look of a prostitute,' said he, laying a purse on the chimney-shelf. 'There is something in your manner, in your clothes—something indefinable which is well known to Parisians, and proclaims you what you are. Have you never met in the streets or on the Boulevards a modest and virtuous girl walking with her mother?'

'Oh yes, to my sorrow! The sight of a mother and daughter is one of our most cruel punishments; it arouses the remorse that lurks in the innermost folds of our heart, and that is consuming us.—I know too well all I lack.'

'Well, then, you know how you should look next Sunday,' said the priest, rising.

'Oh!' said she, 'teach me one real prayer before you go, that I may pray to God.'

It was a touching thing to see the priest making this girl repeat *Ave Maria* and *Paternoster* in French.

'That is very fine!' said Esther, when she had repeated these two grand and universal utterances of the Catholic faith without making a mistake.

'What is your name?' she asked the priest when he took leave of her.

'Carlos Herrera; I am a Spaniard banished from my country.'

Esther took his hand and kissed it. She was no longer the courtesan; she was an angel rising after a fall.

In a religious institution, famous for the aristocratic and pious teaching imparted there, one Monday morning in the beginning of March 1824 the pupils found their pretty flock increased by a newcomer, whose beauty triumphed without dispute not only over that of her companions, but over the special details of beauty which

were found severally in perfection in each one of them. In France it is extremely rare, not to say impossible, to meet with the thirty points of perfection, described in Persian verse, and engraved, it is said, in the Seraglio, which are needed to make a woman absolutely beautiful. Though in France the whole is seldom seen, we find exquisite parts. As to that imposing union which sculpture tries to produce, and has produced in a few rare examples like the Diana and the Callipyge, it is the privileged possession of Greece and Asia Minor.

Esther came from that cradle of the human race ; her mother was a Jewess. The Jews, though so often deteriorated by their contact with other nations, have, among their many races, families in which this sublime type of Asiatic beauty has been preserved. When they are not repulsively hideous, they present the splendid characteristics of Armenian beauty. Esther would have carried off the prize at the Seraglio ; she had the thirty points harmoniously combined. Far from having damaged the finish of her modelling and the freshness of her flesh, her strange life had given her the mysterious charm of womanhood ; it is no longer the close, waxy texture of green fruit and not yet the warm glow of maturity ; there is still the scent of the flower. A few days longer spent in dissolute living, and she would have been too fat. This abundant health, this perfection of the animal in a being in whom voluptuousness took the place of thought, must be a remarkable fact in the eyes of physiologists. A circumstance so rare, that it may be called impossible in very young girls, was that her hands, incomparably fine in shape, were as soft, transparent, and white as those of a woman after the birth of her second child. She had exactly the hair and the foot for which the Duchesse de Berri was so famous, hair so thick that no hairdresser could gather it into his hand, and so long that it fell to the ground in rings ; for Esther was of that medium height which makes a woman a sort of toy, to

be taken up and set down, taken up again and carried without fatigue. Her skin, as fine as rice-paper, of a warm amber hue showing the purple veins, was satiny without dryness, soft without being clammy.

Esther, excessively strong though apparently fragile, arrested attention by one feature that is conspicuous in the faces in which Raphael has shown his most artistic feeling, for Raphael is the painter who has most studied and best rendered Jewish beauty. This remarkable effect was produced by the depth of the eye-socket, under which the eye moved free from its setting; the arch of the brow was so accurate as to resemble the groining of a vault. When youth lends this beautiful hollow its pure and diaphanous colouring, and edges it with closely-set eyebrows, when the light stealing into the circular cavity beneath lingers there with a rosy hue, there are tender treasures in it to delight a lover, beauties to drive a painter to despair. Those luminous curves, where the shadows have a golden tone, that tissue as firm as a sinew and as mobile as the most delicate membrane, is a crowning achievement of nature. The eye at rest within is like a miraculous egg in a nest of silken wings. But as time goes on this marvel acquires a dreadful melancholy, when passions have laid dark smears on those fine forms, when grief has furrowed that network of delicate veins. Esther's nationality proclaimed itself in this Oriental modelling of her eyes with their Turkish lids; their colour was a slate-grey which by night took on the blue sheen of a raven's wing. It was only the extreme tenderness of her expression that could moderate their fire.

Only those races that are native to deserts have in the eye the power of fascinating everybody, for any woman can fascinate some one person. Their eyes preserve, no doubt, something of the infinitude they have gazed on. Has nature, in her foresight, armed their retina with some reflecting background to enable them to endure

the mirage of the sand, the torrents of sunshine, and the burning cobalt of the sky ? or, do human beings, like other creatures, derive something from the surroundings among which they grow up, and preserve for ages the qualities they have imbibed from them ? The great solution of this problem of race lies perhaps in the question itself. Instincts are living facts, and their cause dwells in past necessity. Variety in animals is the result of the exercise of these instincts.

To convince ourselves of this long-sought-for truth, it is enough to extend to the herd of mankind the observation recently made on flocks of Spanish and English sheep which, in low meadows where pasture is abundant, feed side by side in close array, but on mountains, where grass is scarce, scatter apart. Take these two kinds of sheep, transfer them to Switzerland or France ; the mountain breeds will feed apart even in a lowland meadow of thick grass, the lowland sheep will keep together even on an alp. Hardly will a succession of generations eliminate acquired and transmitted instincts. After a century the highland spirit reappears in a refractory lamb, just as, after eighteen centuries of exile, the spirit of the East shone in Esther's eyes and features.

Her look had no terrible fascination ; it shed a mild warmth, it was pathetic without being startling, and the sternest wills were melted in its flame. Esther had conquered hatred, she had astonished the depraved souls of Paris ; in short, that look and the softness of her skin had earned her the terrible nickname which had just led her to the verge of the grave. Everything about her was in harmony with these characteristics of the Peri of the burning sands. Her forehead was firmly and proudly moulded. Her nose, like that of the Arab race, was delicate and narrow, with oval nostrils well set and open at the base. Her mouth, fresh and red, was a rose unblemished by a flaw, dissipation had left no trace there.

Her chin, rounded as though some amorous sculptor had polished its fulness, was as white as milk. One thing only that she had not been able to remedy betrayed the courtesan fallen very low: her broken nails, which needed time to recover their shape, so much had they been spoiled by the vulgarest household tasks.

The young boarders began by being jealous of these marvels of beauty, but they ended by admiring them. Before the first week was at an end they were all attached to the artless Jewess, for they were interested in the unknown misfortunes of a girl of eighteen who could neither read nor write, to whom all knowledge and instruction were new, and who was to earn for the Archbishop the triumph of having converted a Jewess to Catholicism and giving the convent a festival in her baptism. They forgave her her beauty, finding themselves her superiors in education.

Esther very soon caught the manners, the accent, the carriage and attitudes of these highly-bred girls; in short, her first nature reasserted itself. The change was so complete that on his first visit Herrera was astonished —Herrera, whom nothing in the world could astonish as it would seem—and the Mother Superior congratulated him on his ward. Never in their experience as teachers had these sisters met with a more charming nature, more Christian meekness, true modesty, nor a greater eagerness to learn. When a girl has suffered such misery as had overwhelmed this poor child, and looks forward to such a reward as the Spaniard held out to Esther, it is hard if she does not realise the miracles of the early Church which the Jesuits revived in Paraguay.

'She is edifying,' said the Superior, kissing her on the brow.

And this essentially Catholic word tells all.

In recreation hours Esther would question her companions, but discreetly, as to the simplest matters in fashionable life, which to her were like the first strange

ideas of life to a child. When she heard that she was to be dressed in white on the day of her baptism and first Communion, that she would wear a white satin fillet, white bows, white shoes, white gloves, and white rosettes in her hair, she melted into tears, to the amazement of her companions. It was the reverse of the scene of Jephtha on the mountain. The courtesan was afraid of being understood; she ascribed this dreadful dejection to the joy with which she looked forward to the function. As there is certainly as wide a gulf between the habits she had given up and the habits she was acquiring as there is between the savage state and civilisation, she had the grace and simplicity and depth which distinguished the wonderful heroine of the American Puritans. She had too, without knowing it, a love that was eating out her heart—a strange love, a desire more violent in her who knew everything than it can be in a maiden who knows nothing, though the two forms of desire have the same cause, and the same end in view.

During the first few months the novelty of a secluded life, the surprises of learning, the handiworks she was taught, the practices of religion, the fervency of a holy resolve, the gentle affections she called forth, and the exercise of the faculties of her awakened intelligence, all helped to repress her memory, even the effort she made to acquire a new one, for she had as much to unlearn as to learn. There is more than one form of memory: the body and mind have each their own; home-sickness, for instance, is a malady of the physical memory. Thus, during the third month, the vehemence of this virgin soul, soaring to Paradise on outspread wings, was not indeed quelled, but fettered by a dull rebellion, of which Esther herself did not know the cause. Like the Scottish sheep, she wanted to pasture in solitude, she could not conquer the instincts begotten of debauchery.

Was it that the foul ways of the Paris she had abjured were calling her back to them? Did the chains of the

hideous habits she had renounced cling to her by forgotten rivets, and was she feeling them, as old soldiers suffer still, the surgeons tell us, in the limbs they have lost? Had vice and excess so soaked into her marrow that holy waters had not yet exorcised the devil lurking there? Was the sight of him for whom her angelic efforts were made, necessary to the poor soul, whom God would surely forgive for mingling human and sacred love? One had led to the other. Was there some transposition of the vital force in her involving her in inevitable suffering? Everything is doubtful and obscure in a case which science scorns to study, regarding the subject as too immoral and too compromising, as if the physician and the writer, the priest and the political student, were not above all suspicion. However, a doctor who was stopped by death had the courage to begin an investigation which he left unfinished.

Perhaps the dark depression to which Esther fell a victim, and which cast a gloom over her happy life, was due to all these causes; and perhaps, unable as she was to suspect them herself, she suffered as sick creatures suffer who know nothing of medicine or surgery.

The fact is strange. Wholesome and abundant food in the place of bad and inflammatory nourishment did not sustain Esther. A pure and regular life, divided between recreation and studies intentionally abridged, taking the place of a disorderly existence of which the pleasures and the pains were equally horrible, exhausted the convent-boarder. The coolest rest, the calmest nights, taking the place of crushing fatigue and the most torturing agitation, gave her low fever, in which the common symptoms were imperceptible to the nursing Sister's eye or finger. In fact, virtue and happiness following on evil and misfortune, security in the stead of anxiety, were as fatal to Esther as her past wretchedness would have been to her young companions. Planted in

corruption, she had grown up in it. That infernal home still had a hold on her, in spite of the commands of a despotic will. What she loathed was life to her, what she loved was killing her.

Her faith was so ardent that her piety was a delight to those about her. She loved to pray. She had opened her spirit to the lights of true religion, and received it without an effort or a doubt. The priest who was her director was delighted with her. Still, at every turn her body resisted the spirit.

To please a whim of Madame de Maintenon's, who fed them with scraps from the royal table, some carp were taken out of a muddy pool and placed in a marble basin of bright, clean water. The carp perished. The animals might be sacrificed, but man could never infect them with the leprosy of flattery. A courtier remarked at Versailles on this mute resistance. 'They are like me,' said the uncrowned queen ; 'they pine for their obscure mud.'

This speech epitomises Esther's story.

At times the poor girl was driven to run about the splendid convent gardens ; she hurried from tree to tree, she rushed into the darkest nooks—seeking? What? She did not know, but she fell a prey to the demon ; she carried on a flirtation with the trees, she appealed to them in unspoken words. Sometimes, in the evening, she stole along under the walls, like a snake, without any shawl over her bare shoulders. Often in chapel, during the service, she remained with her eyes fixed on the Crucifix, melted to tears ; the others admired her ; but she was crying with rage. Instead of the sacred images she hoped to see, those glaring nights when she had led some orgy as Habeneck leads a Beethoven symphony at the Conservatoire—nights of laughter and lasciviousness, with vehement gestures, inextinguishable laughter, rose before her, frenzied, furious, and brutal. She was as mild to look upon as a virgin that clings to

earth only by her woman's shape; within raged an imperial Messalina.

She alone knew the secret of this struggle between the devil and the angel. When the Superior reproved her for having done her hair more fashionably than the rule of the House allowed, she altered it with prompt and beautiful submission; she would have cut her hair off if the Mother had required it of her. This moral home-sickness was truly pathetic in a girl who would rather have perished than have returned to the depths of impurity. She grew pale and altered and thin. The Superior gave her shorter lessons, and called the interesting creature to her room to question her. But Esther was happy; she enjoyed the society of her companions; she felt no pain in any vital part; still, it was vitality itself that was attacked. She regretted nothing; she wanted nothing. The Superior, puzzled by her boarder's answers, did not know what to think when she saw her pining under consuming debility.

The doctor was called in when the girl's condition seemed serious; but this doctor knew nothing of Esther's previous life, and could not guess it; he found every organ sound, the pain could not be localised. The invalid's replies were such as to upset every hypothesis. There remained one way of clearing up the learned man's doubts, which now lighted on a frightful suggestion; but Esther obstinately refused to submit to a medical examination.

In this difficulty the Superior appealed to the Abbé Herrera. The Spaniard came, saw that Esther's condition was desperate, and took the physician aside for a moment. After this confidential interview, the man of science told the man of faith that the only cure lay in a journey to Italy. The Abbé would not hear of such a journey before Esther's baptism and first Communion.

'How long will it be till then?' asked the doctor.

'A month,' replied the Superior.

'She will be dead,' said the doctor.

'Yes, but in a state of grace and salvation,' said the Abbé.

In Spain the religious question is supreme, above all political, civil, or vital considerations; so the physician did not answer the Spaniard. He turned to the Mother Superior, but the terrible Abbé took him by the arm and stopped him.

'Not a word, Monsieur!' said he.

The doctor, though a religious man and a Monarchist, looked at Esther with an expression of tender pity. The girl was as lovely as a lily drooping on its stem.

'God help her, then!' he exclaimed as he went away.

On the very day of this consultation, Esther was taken by her protector to the *Rocher de Cancale*, a famous restaurant, for his wish to save her had suggested strange expedients to the priest. He tried the effect of two excesses—an excellent dinner, which might remind the poor child of past orgies; and the opera, which would give her mind some images of worldliness. His despotic authority was needed to tempt the young saint to such profanation. Herrera disguised himself so effectually as a military man, that Esther hardly recognised him; he took care to make his companion wear a veil, and put her in a box where she was hidden from all eyes.

This palliative, which had no risks for innocence so sincerely regained, soon lost its effect. The convent-boarder viewed her protector's dinners with disgust, had a religious aversion for the theatre, and relapsed into melancholy.

'She is dying of love for Lucien,' said Herrera to himself; he had wanted to sound the depths of this soul, and know how much could be exacted from it.

So the moment came when the poor child was no longer upheld by moral force, and the body was about to break down. The priest calculated the time with the

hideous practical sagacity formerly shown by executioners in the art of torture. He found his protégée in the garden, sitting on a bench under a trellis on which the April sun fell gently; she seemed to be cold and trying to warm herself; her companions looked with interest at her pallor as of a faded plant, her eyes like those of a dying gazelle, her drooping attitude. Esther rose and went to meet the Spaniard with a lassitude that showed how little life there was in her, and, it may be added, how little care to live. This hapless outcast, this wild and wounded swallow, moved Carlos Herrera to compassion for the second time. The gloomy minister, whom God should have employed only to carry out His revenges, received the sick girl with a smile, which expressed, indeed, as much bitterness as sweetness, as much vengeance as charity. Esther, practised in meditation, and used to revulsions of feeling since she had led this almost monastic life, felt on her part, for the second time, distrust of her protector; but, as on the former occasion, his speech reassured her.

'Well, my dear child,' said he, 'and why have you never spoken to me of Lucien?'

'I promised you,' she said, shuddering convulsively from head to foot; 'I swore to you that I would never breathe his name.'

'And yet you have not ceased to think of him.'

'That, Monsieur, is the only fault I have committed. I think of him always; and just as you came, I was saying his name to myself.'

'Absence is killing you?'

Esther's only answer was to hang her head as the sick do who already scent the breath of the grave.

'If you could see him——?' said he.

'It would be life!' she said.

'And do you think of him only spiritually?'

'Ah, Monsieur, love cannot be dissected!'

'Child of an accursed race! I have done everything

to save you; I send you back to your fate.—You shall see him again.'

'Why insult my happiness? Can I not love Lucien and be virtuous? Am I not ready to die here for virtue, as I should be ready to die for him? Am I not dying for these two fanaticisms—for virtue, which was to make me worthy of him, and for him who flung me into the embrace of virtue? Yes, and ready to die without seeing him or to live by seeing him. God is my Judge.'

The colour had mounted to her face, her whiteness had recovered its amber warmth. Esther looked beautiful again.

'The day after that on which you are washed in the waters of baptism you shall see Lucien once more; and if you think you can live in virtue by living for him, you shall part no more.'

The priest was obliged to lift up Esther, whose knees failed her; the poor child dropped as if the ground had slipped from under her feet. The Abbé seated her on a bench; and when she could speak again, she asked him—

'Why not to-day?'

'Do you want to rob Monseigneur of the triumph of your baptism and conversion? You are too close to Lucien not to be far from God.'

'Yes, I was not thinking——'

'You will never be of any religion,' said the priest, with a touch of the deepest irony.

'God is good,' said she; 'He can read my heart.'

Conquered by the exquisite artlessness that shone in her look, by her tone of voice, her attitude and gestures, Herrera kissed her on the forehead for the first time.

'Your libertine friends named you well; you would bewitch God the Father.—A few days more must pass, and then you will both be free.'

'Both!' she echoed in an ecstasy of joy.

This scene, observed from a distance, struck pupils

and superiors alike; they fancied they had looked on at a miracle as they compared Esther with herself. She was completely changed; she was alive. She reappeared her natural self, all love, sweet, coquettish, playful, and gay; in short, it was a resurrection.

Herrera lived in the Rue Cassette, near Saint-Sulpice, the church to which he was attached. This building, hard and stern in style, suited this Spaniard, whose discipline was that of the Dominicans. A lost son of Ferdinand VII.'s astute policy, he devoted himself to the cause of the constitution, knowing that this devotion could never be rewarded till the restoration of the *Rey netto*. Carlos Herrera had thrown himself body and soul into the *Camarilla* at the moment when the Cortes seemed likely to stand and hold their own. To the world this conduct seemed to proclaim a superior soul. The Duc d'Angoulême's expedition had been carried out, King Ferdinand was on the throne, and Carlos Herrera did not go to claim the reward of his services at Madrid. Fortified against curiosity by his diplomatic taciturnity, he assigned as his reason for remaining in Paris his strong affection for Lucien de Rubempré, to which the young man already owed the King's patent relating to his change of name.

Herrera lived very obscurely, as priests employed on secret missions traditionally live. He fulfilled his religious duties at Saint-Sulpice, never went out but on business, and then after dark, and in a hackney cab. His day was filled up with a siesta in the Spanish fashion, which arranges for sleep between the two chief meals, and so occupies the hours when Paris is in a busy turmoil. The Spanish cigar also played its part, and consumed time as well as tobacco. Laziness is a mask as gravity is, and that again is laziness.

Herrera lived on the second floor in one wing of the house, and Lucien occupied the other wing. The two

apartments were separated and joined by a large reception room of antique magnificence, suitable equally to the grave priest and to the young poet. The courtyard was gloomy; large, thick trees shaded the garden. Silence and reserve are always found in the dwellings chosen by priests. Herrera's lodging may be described in one word—a cell. Lucien's, splendid with luxury, and furnished with every refinement of comfort, combined everything that the elegant life of a dandy demands—a poet, a writer, ambitious and dissipated, at once vain and vain-glorious, utterly heedless, and yet wishing for order, one of those incomplete geniuses who have some power to wish, to conceive—which is perhaps the same thing—but no power at all to execute.

These two, Lucien and Herrera, formed a body politic. This, no doubt, was the secret of their union. Old men in whom the activities of life have been uprooted and transplanted to the sphere of interest, often feel the need of a pleasing instrument, a young and impassioned actor, to carry out their schemes. Richelieu, too late, found a handsome pale face with a young moustache to cast in the way of women whom he wanted to amuse. Misunderstood by giddy-pated younger men, he was compelled to banish his master's mother and terrify the Queen, after having tried to make each fall in love with him, though he was not cut out to be loved by queens.

Do what we will, always, in the course of an ambitious life, we find a woman in the way just when we least expect such an obstacle. However great a political man may be, he always needs a woman to set against a woman, just as the Dutch use a diamond to cut a diamond. Rome at the height of its power yielded to this necessity. And observe how immeasurably more imposing was the life of Mazarin, the Italian cardinal, than that of Richelieu, the French cardinal. Richelieu met with opposition from the great nobles, and he applied the axe; he died in the flower of his success, worn out by this duel, for

which he had only a Capuchin monk as his second. Mazarin was repulsed by the citizen class and the nobility, armed allies who sometimes victoriously put royalty to flight; but Anne of Austria's devoted servant took off no heads, he succeeded in vanquishing the whole of France, and trained Louis XIV., who completed Richelieu's work by strangling the nobility with gilded cords in the grand Seraglio of Versailles. Madame de Pompadour dead, Choiseul fell!

Had Herrera soaked his mind in these high doctrines? Had he judged himself at an earlier age than Richelieu? Had he chosen Lucien to be his Cinq-Mars, but a faithful Cinq-Mars? No one could answer these questions or measure this Spaniard's ambition, as no one could foresee what his end might be. These questions, asked by those who were able to see anything of this coalition, which was long kept a secret, might have unveiled a horrible mystery which Lucien himself had known but a few days. Carlos was ambitious for two: that was what his conduct made plain to those persons who knew him, and who all imagined that Lucien was the priest's illegitimate son.

Fifteen months after Lucien's reappearance at the opera ball, which led him too soon into a world where the priest had not wished to see him till he should have fully armed him against it, he had three fine horses in his stable, a *coupé* for evening use, a cab and a tilbury to drive by day. He dined out every day. Herrera's foresight was justified; his pupil was carried away by dissipation; he thought it necessary to effect some diversion in the frenzied passion for Esther that the young man still cherished in his heart. After spending something like forty thousand francs, every folly had brought Lucien back with increased eagerness to La Torpille; he searched for her persistently; and as he could not find her, she became to him what game is to the sportsman.

Could Herrera understand the nature of a poet's love?

When once this feeling has mounted to the brain of one of these great little men, after firing his heart and absorbing his senses, the poet becomes as far superior to humanity through love as he already is through the power of his imagination. A freak of intellectual heredity has given him the faculty of expressing nature by imagery, to which he gives the stamp both of sentiment and of thought, and he lends his love the wings of his spirit; he feels, and he paints, he acts and meditates, he multiplies his sensations by thought, present felicity becomes threefold through aspiration for the future and memory of the past; and with it he mingles the exquisite delights of the soul, which make him the prince of artists. Then the poet's passion becomes a fine poem in which human proportion is often set at nought. Does not the poet then place his mistress far higher than women crave to sit? Like the sublime Knight of la Mancha, he transfigures a peasant girl to be a princess. He uses for his own behoof the wand with which he touches everything, turning it into a wonder, and thus enhances the pleasure of loving by the glorious glamour of the ideal.

Such a love is the very essence of passion. It is extreme in all things, in its hopes, in its despair, in its rage, in its melancholy, in its joy; it flies, it leaps, it crawls; it is not like any of the emotions known to ordinary men; it is to everyday love what the perennial Alpine torrent is to the lowland brook.

These splendid geniuses are so rarely understood that they spend themselves in hopes deceived; they are exhausted by the search for their ideal mistress, and almost always die like gorgeous insects splendidly adorned for their love-festival by the most poetical of nature's inventions, and crushed under the foot of a passer-by. But there is another danger! When they meet with the form that answers to their soul, and which not unfrequently is that of a baker's wife, they do as

Raphael did, as the beautiful insect does, they die in the Fornarina's arms.

Lucien was at this pass. His poetical temperament, excessive in all things, in good as in evil, had discerned the angel in this girl, who was tainted by corruption rather than corrupt; he always saw her white, winged, pure, and mysterious, as she had made herself for him, understanding that he would have her so.

Towards the end of the month of May 1825 Lucien had lost all his good spirits; he never went out, dined with Herrera, sat pensive, worked, read volumes of diplomatic treatises, squatted Turkish-fashion on a divan, and smoked three or four hookahs a day. His groom had more to do in cleaning and perfuming the tubes of this noble pipe than in currying and brushing down the horses' coats, and dressing them with cockades for driving in the Bois. As soon as the Spaniard saw Lucien pale, and detected a malady in the frenzy of suppressed passion, he determined to read to the bottom of this man's heart on which he founded his life.

One fine evening, when Lucien, lounging in an arm-chair, was mechanically contemplating the hues of the setting sun through the trees in the garden, blowing up the mist of scented smoke in slow, regular clouds, as pensive smokers are wont, he was roused from his reverie by hearing a deep sigh. He turned and saw the Abbé standing by him with folded arms.

'You were there!' said the poet.

'For some time,' said the priest, 'my thoughts have been following the wide sweep of yours.' Lucien understood his meaning.

'I have never affected to have an iron nature such as yours is. To me life is by turns paradise and hell; when by chance it is neither, it bores me; and I am bored——'

'How can you be bored when you have such splendid prospects before you?'

'If I have no faith in those prospects, or if they are too much shrouded ?'

'Do not talk nonsense,' said the priest. 'It would be far more worthy of you and of me that you should open your heart to me. There is now that between us which ought never to have come between us—a secret. This secret has subsisted for sixteen months. You are in love.'

'And what then ?'

'A foul hussy called La Torpille——'

'Well ?'

'My boy, I told you you might have a mistress, but a woman of rank, pretty, young, influential, a Countess at least. I had chosen Madame d'Espard for you, to make her the instrument of your fortune without scruple ; for she would never have perverted your heart, she would have left you free.—To love a prostitute of the lowest class when you have not, like kings, the power to give her high rank, is a monstrous blunder.'

'And am I the first man who has renounced ambition to follow the lead of a boundless passion ?'

'Good !' said the priest, stooping to pick up the mouthpiece of the hookah which Lucien had dropped on the floor. 'I understand the retort. Cannot love and ambition be reconciled ? Child, you have a mother in old Herrera—a mother who is wholly devoted to you——'

'I know it, old friend,' said Lucien, taking his hand and shaking it.

'You wished for the toys of wealth ; you have them. You want to shine ; I am guiding you into the paths of power, I kiss very dirty hands to secure your advancement, and you will get on. A little while yet and you will lack nothing of what can charm man or woman. Though effeminate in your caprices, your intellect is manly. I have dreamed all things of you ; I forgive you all. You have only to speak to have your ephemeral

passions gratified. I have aggrandised your life by introducing into it that which makes it delightful to most people—the stamp of political influence and dominion. You will be as great as you now are small; but we must not break the machine by which we coin money. I grant you all you will excepting such blunders as will destroy your future prospects. When I can open the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain to you, I forbid your wallowing in the gutter. Lucien, I mean to be an iron stanchion in your interest; I will endure everything from you, for you. Thus I have transformed your lack of tact in the game of life into the shrewd stroke of a skilful player——'

Lucien looked up with a start of furious impetuosity.

'I carried off La Torpille!'

'You?' cried Lucien.

In a fit of animal rage the poet jumped up, flung the jewelled mouthpiece in the priest's face, and pushed him with such violence as to throw down that strong man.

'I,' said the Spaniard, getting up and preserving his terrible gravity.

His black wig had fallen off. A bald skull, as shining as a death's-head, showed the man's real countenance. It was appalling. Lucien sat on his divan, his hands hanging limp, overpowered, and gazing at the Abbé with stupefaction.

'I carried her off,' the priest repeated.

'What did you do with her? You took her away the day after the opera ball.'

'Yes, the day after I had seen a woman who belonged to you insulted by wretches whom I would not have condescended to kick downstairs.'

'Wretches!' interrupted Lucien, 'say rather monsters, compared with whom those who are guillotined are angels. Do you know what the unhappy Torpille had done for three of them? One of them was her lover for two months. She was poor, and picked up a living in

the gutter; he had not a sou; like me, when you rescued me, he was very near the river; this fellow would get up at night and go to the cupboard where the girl kept the remains of her dinner and eat it. At last she discovered the trick; she understood the shameful thing, and took care to leave a great deal; then she was happy. She never told any one but me, that night, coming home from the opera.

'The second had stolen some money; but before the theft was found out, she lent him the sum, which he was enabled to replace, and which he always forgot to repay to the poor child.

'As to the third, she made his fortune by playing out a farce worthy of Figaro's genius. She passed as his wife and became the mistress of a man in power, who believed her to be the most innocent of good citizens. To one she gave life, to another honour, to the third fortune—what does it all count for to-day? And this is how they reward her!'

'Would you like to see them dead?' said Herrera, in whose eyes there were tears.

'Come, that is just like you! I know you by that——'

'Nay, hear all, raving poet,' said the priest. 'La Torpille is no more.'

Lucien flew at Herrera to seize him by the throat, with such violence that any other man must have fallen backwards; but the Spaniard's arm held off his assailant.

'Come, listen,' said he coldly. 'I have made another woman of her, chaste, pure, well bred, religious, a perfect lady. She is being educated. She can, if she may, under the influence of your love, become a Ninon, a Marion Delorme, a du Barry, as the journalist at the opera ball remarked. You may proclaim her your mistress, or you may retire behind a curtain of your own creating, which will be wiser. By either method you will gain profit and pride, pleasure and advancement;

but if you are as great a politician as you are a poet, Esther will be no more to you than any other woman of the town; for, later, perhaps she may help us out of difficulties; she is worth her weight in gold. Drink, but do not get tipsy.

'If I had not held the reins of your passion, where would you be now? Rolling with La Torpille in the slough of misery from which I dragged you. Here, read this,' said Herrera, as simply as Talma in *Manlius*, which he had never seen.

A sheet of paper was laid on the poet's knees, and startled him from the ecstasy and surprise with which he had listened to this astounding speech; he took it, and read the first letter written by Mademoiselle Esther:—

To Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera.

'My dear Protector,—Will you not suppose that gratitude is stronger in me than love, when you see that the first use I make of the power of expressing my thoughts is to thank you, instead of devoting it to pouring forth a passion that Lucien has perhaps forgotten. But to you, divine man, I can say what I should not dare to tell him, who, to my joy, still clings to earth.

'Yesterday's ceremony has filled me with treasures of grace, and I place my fate in your hands. Even if I must die far away from my beloved, I shall die purified like the Magdalen, and my soul will become to him the rival of his guardian angel. Can I ever forget yesterday's festival? How could I wish to abdicate the glorious throne to which I was raised? Yesterday I washed away every stain in the waters of baptism, and received the Sacred Body of my Redeemer; I am become one of His tabernacles. At that moment I heard the songs of angels, I was more than a woman, was born to a life of light amid the acclamations of the whole earth, admired by the world in a cloud of incense and prayers that were

intoxicating, adorned like a virgin for the Heavenly Spouse.

'Thus finding myself worthy of Lucien, which I had never hoped to be, I abjured impure love and vowed to walk only in the paths of virtue. If my flesh is weaker than my spirit, let it perish. Be the arbiter of my destiny ; and if I die, tell Lucien that I died to him when I was born to God.'

Lucien looked up at the Abbé with eyes full of tears.

'You know the rooms fat Caroline Bellefeuille had, in the Rue Taitbout,' the Spaniard said. 'The poor creature, cast off by her magistrate, was in the greatest poverty ; she was about to be sold up. I bought the place all standing, and she turned out with her clothes. Esther, the angel who aspired to heaven, has alighted there, and is waiting for you.'

At this moment Lucien heard his horses pawing the ground in the courtyard ; he was incapable of expressing his admiration for a devotion which he alone could appreciate ; he threw himself into the arms of the man he had insulted, made amends for all by a look and the speechless effusion of his feelings. Then he flew downstairs, confided Esther's address to his tiger's ear, and the horses went off as if their master's passion lived in their legs.

The next day a man, who by his dress might have been mistaken by the passers-by for a gendarme in disguise, was passing the Rue Taitbout, opposite a house, as if he were waiting for some one to come out ; he walked with an agitated air. You will often see in Paris such vehement promenaders, real gendarmes watching a recalcitrant National Guardsman, bailiffs taking steps to effect an arrest, creditors planning a trick on the debtor who has shut himself in, lovers, or jealous and suspicious husbands, or friends doing sentry for a friend ; but rarely do you meet a face portending

such coarse and fierce thoughts as animated that of the gloomy and powerful man who paced to and fro under Mademoiselle Esther's windows with the brooding haste of a bear in its cage.

At noon a window was opened, and a maid-servant's hand was put out to push back the padded shutters. A few minutes later, Esther, in her dressing-gown, came to breathe the air, leaning on Lucien; any one who saw them might have taken them for the originals of some pretty English vignette. Esther was the first to recognise the basilisk eyes of the Spanish priest; and the poor creature, stricken as if she had been shot, gave a cry of horror.

'There is that terrible priest,' said she, pointing him out to Lucien.

'He!' said Lucien, smiling, 'he is no more a priest than you are.'

'What then?' she said in alarm.

'Why, an old villain who believes in nothing but the devil,' said Lucien.

This light thrown on the sham priest's secrets, if revealed to any one less devoted than Esther, might have ruined Lucien for ever.

As they went along the corridor from their bedroom to the dining-room, where their breakfast was served, the lovers met Carlos Herrera.

'What have you come here for?' said Lucien roughly.

'To bless you,' replied the audacious scoundrel, stopping the pair and detaining them in the little drawing-room of the apartment. 'Listen to me, my pretty dears. Amuse yourselves, be happy—well and good! Happiness at any price is my motto.—But you,' he went on to Esther, 'you whom I dragged from the mud, and have soaped down body and soul, you surely do not dream that you can stand in Lucien's way?—As for you, my boy,' he went on after a pause, looking at Lucien,

'you are no longer poet enough to allow yourself another Coralie. This is sober prose. What can be done with Esther's lover? Nothing. Can Esther become Madame de Rubempré? No.

'Well, my child,' said he, laying his hand on Esther's, and making her shiver as if some serpent had wound itself round her, 'the world must never know of your existence. Above all, the world must never know that a certain Mademoiselle Esther loves Lucien, and that Lucien is in love with her.—These rooms are your prison, my pigeon. If you wish to go out—and your health will require it—you must take exercise at night, at hours when you cannot be seen; for your youth and beauty, and the style you have acquired at the Convent, would at once be observed in Paris. The day when any one in the world, whoever it be,' he added in an awful voice, seconded by an awful look, 'learns that Lucien is your lover, or that you are his mistress, that day will be your last but one on earth. I have procured that boy a patent permitting him to bear the name and arms of his maternal ancestors. Still, this is not all; we have not yet recovered the title of Marquis; and to get it, he must marry a girl of good family, in whose favour the King will grant this distinction. Such an alliance will get Lucien on in the world and at Court. This boy, of whom I have made a man, will be first Secretary to an Embassy; later, he shall be Minister at some German Court, and God, or I—better still—helping him, he will take his seat some day on the bench reserved for peers——'

'Or on the bench reserved for——' Lucien began, interrupting the man.

'Hold your tongue!' cried Carlos, laying his broad hand on Lucien's mouth. 'Would you tell such a secret to a woman?' he muttered in his ear.

'Esther! A woman!' cried the poet of *Les Marguerites*.

'Still inditing sonnets!' said the Spaniard. 'Nonsense! Sooner or later all these angels relapse into being women,

and every woman at moments is a mixture of a monkey and a child, two creatures who can kill us for fun.—Esther, my jewel,' said he to the terrified girl, 'I have secured as your waiting-maid a creature who is as much mine as if she were my daughter. For your cook, you shall have a mulatto woman, which gives style to a house. With Europe and Asia you can live here for a thousand-franc note a month like a queen—a stage queen. Europe has been a dressmaker, a milliner, and a stage super; Asie has cooked for an epicure *Milord*. These two women will serve you like two fairies.'

Seeing Lucien go completely to the wall before this man, who was guilty at least of sacrilege and forgery, this woman, sanctified by her love, felt an awful fear in the depths of her heart. She made no reply, but dragged Lucien into her room, and asked him—

'Is he the devil?'

'He is far worse to me!' he vehemently replied. 'But if you love me, try to imitate that man's devotion to me, and obey him on pain of death!——'

'Of death!' she exclaimed, more frightened than ever.

'Of death,' repeated Lucien. 'Alas! my darling, no death could be compared with that which would befall me if——'

Esther turned pale at his words, and felt herself fainting.

'Well, well,' cried the sacrilegious forger, 'have you not yet spelt out your daisy-petals?'

Esther and Lucien came out, and the poor girl, not daring to look at the mysterious man, said—

'You shall be obeyed as God is obeyed, Monsieur.'

'Good,' said he. 'You may be very happy for a time, and you will need only nightgowns and wrappers—that will be very economical.'

The two lovers went on towards the dining-room, but Lucien's patron signed to the pretty pair to stop. And they stopped.

'I have just been talking of your servants, my child,' said he to Esther. 'I must introduce them to you.'

The Spaniard rang twice. The women he had called Europe and Asie came in, and it was at once easy to see the reason of these names.

Asie, who looked as if she might have been born in the Island of Java, showed a face to scare the eye, as flat as a board, with the copper complexion peculiar to Malays, with a nose that looked as if it had been driven inwards by some violent pressure. The strange conformation of the maxillary bones gave the lower part of this face a resemblance to that of the larger species of apes. The brow, though sloping, was not deficient in intelligence produced by habits of cunning. Two fierce little eyes had the calm fixity of a tiger's, but they never looked you straight in the face. Asie seemed afraid lest she might terrify people. Her lips, a dull blue, were parted over prominent teeth of dazzling whiteness, but grown across. The leading expression of this animal countenance was one of meanness. Her black hair, straight and greasy-looking like her skin, lay in two shining bands, forming an edge to a very handsome silk handkerchief. Her ears were remarkably pretty, and graced with two large dark pearls. Small, short, and squat, Asie bore a likeness to the grotesque figures the Chinese love to paint on screens, or, more exactly, to the Hindoo idols which seem to be imitated from some non-existent type, found, nevertheless, now and again by travellers. Esther shuddered as she looked at this monstrosity, dressed out in a white apron over a stuff gown.

'Asie,' said the Spaniard, to whom the woman looked up with a gesture that can only be compared to that of a dog to its master, 'this is your mistress.'

And he pointed to Esther in her wrapper.

Asie looked at the young fairy with an almost distressful expression; but at the same moment a flash,

half hidden between her thick, short eyelashes, shot like an incendiary spark at Lucien, who, in a magnificent dressing-gown thrown open over a fine Holland linen shirt and red trousers, with a Turkish fez on his head, beneath which his fair hair fell in thick curls, presented a godlike appearance.

Italian genius could invent the tale of Othello; English genius could put it on the stage; but Nature alone reserves the power of throwing into a single glance an expression of jealousy grander and more complete than England and Italy together could imagine. This look, seen by Esther, made her clutch the Spaniard by the arm, setting her nails in it as a cat sets its claws to save itself from falling into a gulf of which it cannot see the bottom.

The Spaniard spoke a few words, in some unfamiliar tongue, to the Asiatic monster, who crept on her knees to Esther's feet and kissed them.

'She is not merely a good cook,' said Herrera to Esther; 'she is a past-master, and might make Carême mad with jealousy. Asie can do everything by way of cooking. She will turn you out a simple dish of beans that will make you wonder whether the angels have not come down to add some herb from heaven. She will go to market herself every morning, and fight like the devil she is to get things at the lowest price; she will tire out curiosity by silence.

'You are to be supposed to have been in India, and Asie will help you to give effect to this fiction, for she is one of those Parisians who are born to be of any nationality they please. But I do not advise that you should give yourself out to be a foreigner.—Europe, what do you say?'

Europe was a perfect contrast to Asie, for she was the smartest waiting-maid that Monrose could have hoped to see as her rival on the stage. Slight, with a scatter-brain manner, a face like a weasel, and a sharp nose, Europe's feutures offered to the observer a countenance

worn by the corruption of Paris life, the unhealthy complexion of a girl fed on raw apples, lymphatic but sinewy, soft but tenacious. One little foot was set forward, her hands were in her apron-pockets, and she fidgeted incessantly without moving, from sheer excess of liveliness. Grisette and stage super, in spite of her youth she must have tried many trades. As full of evil as a dozen Madelonnettes put together, she might have robbed her parents, and sat on the bench of a police-court.

Asie was terrifying, but you knew her thoroughly from the first; she descended in a straight line from Locusta; while Europe filled you with uneasiness, which could not fail to increase the more you had to do with her; her corruption seemed boundless. You felt that she could set the devils by the ears.

'Madame might say she had come from Valenciennes,' said Europe in a precise little voice. 'I was born there. —Perhaps Monsieur,' she added to Lucien in a pedantic tone, 'will be good enough to say what name he proposes to give to Madame?'

'Madame van Bogseck,' the Spaniard put in, reversing Esther's name. 'Madame is a Jewess, a native of Holland, the widow of a merchant, and suffering from a liver-complaint contracted in Java. No great fortune— not to excite curiosity.'

'Enough to live on—six thousand francs a year; and we shall complain of her stinginess?' said Europe.

'That is the thing,' said the Spaniard, with a bow. 'You limbs of Satan!' he went on, catching Asie and Europe exchanging a glance that displeased him, 'remember what I have told you. You are serving a queen; you owe her as much respect as to a queen; you are to cherish her as you would cherish a revenge, and be as devoted to her as to me. Neither the door-porter, nor the neighbours, nor the other inhabitants of the house— in short, not a soul on earth is to know what goes on here. It is your business to baulk curiosity if any should

be roused.—And, Madame,' he went on, laying his broad hairy hand on Esther's arm, 'Madame must not commit the smallest imprudence; you must prevent it in case of need, but always with perfect respect.

'You, Europe, are to go out for Madame in anything that concerns her dress, and you must do her sewing from motives of economy. Finally, nobody, not even the most insignificant creature, is ever to set foot in this apartment. You two, between you, must do all there is to be done.

'And you, my beauty,' he went on, speaking to Esther, 'when you want to go out in your carriage by night, you can tell Europe; she will know where to find your men, for you will have a servant in livery, of my choosing, like these two slaves.'

Esther and Lucien had not a word ready. They listened to the Spaniard, and looked at the two precious specimens to whom he gave his orders. What was the secret hold to which he owed the submission and servitude that were written on these two faces—one mischievously recalcitrant, the other so malignantly cruel?

He read the thoughts of Lucien and Esther, who seemed paralysed, as Paul and Virginia might have been at the sight of two dreadful snakes, and he said in a good-natured undertone—

'You can trust them as you can me; keep no secrets from them; that will flatter them.—Go to your work, my little Asie,' he added to the cook.—'And you, my girl, lay another place,' he said to Europe; 'the children cannot do less than ask papa to breakfast.'

When the two women had shut the door, and the Spaniard could hear Europe moving to and fro, he turned to Lucien and Esther, and opening a wide palm, he said—

'I hold them in the hollow of my hand.'

The words and gesture made his hearers shudder.

'Where did you pick them up?' cried Lucien.

'What the devil! I did not look for them at the foot

of the throne!' replied the man. 'Europe has risen from the mire, and is afraid of sinking into it again. Threaten them with Monsieur l'Abbé when they do not please you, and you will see them quake like mice when the cat is mentioned. I am used to taming wild beasts,' he added with a smile.

'You strike me as being a demon,' said Esther, clinging closer to Lucien.

'My child, I tried to win you to heaven; but a repentant Magdalen is always a practical joke on the Church. If ever there were one, she would relapse into the courtesan in Paradise. You have gained this much: you are forgotten, and have acquired the manners of a lady, for you learnt in the convent what you never could have learnt in the ranks of infamy in which you were living.—You owe me nothing,' said he, observing a beautiful look of gratitude on Esther's face. 'I did it all for him,' and he pointed to Lucien. 'You are, you will always be, you will die a prostitute; for in spite of the delightful theories of cattle-breeders, you can never, here below, become anything but what you are. The man who feels bumps is right. You have the bump of love.'

The Spaniard, it will be seen, was a fatalist, like Napoleon, Mahomet, and many other great politicians. It is a strange thing that most men of action have a tendency to fatalism, just as most great thinkers have a tendency to believe in Providence.

'What I am, I do not know,' said Esther with angelic sweetness; 'but I love Lucien, and shall die worshipping him.'

'Come to breakfast,' said the Spaniard sharply. 'And pray to God that Lucien may not marry too soon, for then you would never see him again.'

'His marriage would be my death,' said she.

She allowed the sham priest to lead the way, that she might stand on tiptoe and whisper to Lucien without being seen.

'Is it your wish,' said she, 'that I should remain in the power of this man who sets two hyænas to guard me?'

Lucien bowed his head.

The poor child swallowed down her grief and affected gladness, but she felt cruelly oppressed. It needed more than a year of constant and devoted care before she was accustomed to these two dreadful creatures whom Carlos Herrera called the two watch-dogs.

Lucien's conduct since his return to Paris had borne the stamp of such profound policy that it excited—and could not fail to excite—the jealousy of all his former friends, on whom he took no vengeance but by making them furious at his success, at his exquisite 'get up,' and his way of keeping every one at a distance. The poet, once so communicative, so genial, had turned cold and reserved. De Marsay, the model adopted by all the youth of Paris, did not make a greater display of reticence in speech and deed than did Lucien. As to brains, the journalist had ere now proved his mettle. De Marsay, against whom many people chose to pit Lucien, giving a preference to the poet, was small-minded enough to resent this.

Lucien, now in high favour with men who secretly pulled the wires of power, was so completely indifferent to literary fame, that he did not care about the success of his romance, republished under its real title, *L'Archer de Charles IX*, or the excitement caused by his volume of sonnets called *Les Marguerites*, of which Dauriat sold out the edition in a week.

'It is posthumous fame,' said he, with a laugh, to Mademoiselle des Touches, who congratulated him.

The terrible Spaniard held his creature with an iron hand, keeping him in the road towards the goal where the trumpets and gifts of victory await patient politicians. Lucien had taken Beaudenord's bachelor quarters on the Quai Malaquais, to be near the Rue Taitbout, and his

adviser was lodging under the same roof on the fourth floor. Lucien kept only one horse to ride and drive, a man-servant, and a groom. When he was not dining out, he dined with Esther.

Carlos Herrera kept such a keen eye on the service in the house on the Quai Malaquais, that Lucien did not spend ten thousand francs a year, all told. Ten thousand more were enough for Esther, thanks to the unfailing and inexplicable devotion of Asie and Europe. Lucien took the utmost precautions in going in and out at the Rue Taitbout. He never came but in a cab, with the blinds down, and always drove into the court-yard. Thus his passion for Esther, and the very existence of the establishment in the Rue Taitbout, being unknown to the world, did him no harm in his connections or undertakings. No rash word ever escaped him on this delicate subject. His mistakes of this sort with regard to Coralie, at the time of his first stay in Paris, had given him experience.

In the first place, his life was marked by the correct regularity under which many mysteries can be hidden; he remained in society every night till one in the morning; he was always at home from ten till one in the afternoon; then he drove in the Bois de Boulogne and paid calls till five. He was rarely to be seen on foot, and thus avoided old acquaintances. When some journalist or one of his former associates waved him a greeting, he responded with a bow, polite enough to avert annoyance, but significant of such deep contempt as killed all French geniality. He thus had very soon got rid of persons whom he would rather never have known.

An old-established aversion kept him from going to see Madame d'Espard, who often wished to get him to her house; but when he met her at those of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, of Mademoiselle des Touches, of the Comtesse de Montcornet or elsewhere, he was always exquisitely polite to her. This hatred, fully reciprocated by Madame d'Espard, compelled Lucien to

act with prudence ; but it will be seen how he had added fuel to it by allowing himself a stroke of revenge, which gained him indeed a severe lecture from Carlos.

'You are not yet strong enough to be revenged on any one, whoever it may be,' said the Spaniard. 'When we are walking under a burning sun we do not stop to gather even the finest flowers.'

Lucien was so genuinely superior, and had so fine a future before him, that the young men who chose to be offended or puzzled by his return to Paris and his unaccountable good fortune were enchanted whenever they could do him an ill turn. He knew that he had many enemies, and was well aware of these hostile feelings among his friends. The Abbé, indeed, took admirable care of his adopted son, putting him on his guard against the treachery of the world and the fatal imprudence of youth. Lucien was expected to tell, and did in fact tell the Abbé each evening, every trivial incident of the day. Thanks to his Mentor's advice, he put the keenest curiosity—the curiosity of the world—off the scent. Entrenched in the gravity of an Englishman, and fortified by the redoubts cast up by diplomatic circumspection, he never gave any one the right or the opportunity of seeing a corner even of his concerns. His handsome young face had, by practice, become as expressionless in society as that of a princess at a ceremonial.

Towards the middle of 1829 his marriage began to be talked of to the eldest daughter of the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who at that time had no less than four daughters to provide for. No one doubted that in honour of such an alliance the King would revive for Lucien the title of Marquis. This distinction would establish Lucien's fortune as a diplomate, and he would probably be accredited as Minister to some German Court. For the last three years Lucien's life had been regular above reproach ; indeed, de Marsay had made this remarkable speech about him—

'That young fellow must have a very strong hand behind him.'

Thus Lucien was almost a person of importance. His passion for Esther had, in fact, helped him greatly to play his part of a serious man. A habit of this kind guards an ambitious man from many follies; having no connection with any woman of fashion, he cannot be caught by the reactions of mere physical nature on his moral sense.

As to happiness, Lucien's was the realisation of a poet's dreams—a penniless poet's, hungering in a garret. Esther, the ideal courtesan in love, while she reminded Lucien of Coralie, the actress with whom he had lived for a year, completely eclipsed her. Every loving and devoted woman invents seclusion, incognito, the life of a pearl in the depths of the sea; but to most of them this is no more than one of the delightful whims which supply a subject for conversation, a proof of love which they dream of giving, but do not give; whereas Esther, to whom her first enchantment was ever new, who lived perpetually in the glow of Lucien's first incendiary glance, never, in four years, had an impulse of curiosity. She gave her whole mind to the task of adhering to the terms of the programme prescribed by the sinister Spaniard. Nay more! In the midst of intoxicating happiness she never took unfair advantage of the unlimited power that the constantly revived desire of a lover gives to the woman he loves to ask Lucien a single question regarding Herrera, of whom indeed she lived in constant awe; she dared not even think of him. The elaborate benefactions of that extraordinary man, to whom Esther undoubtedly owed her feminine accomplishment and her well-bred manner, struck the poor girl as advances on account of hell.

'I shall have to pay for all this some day,' she would tell herself with dismay.

Every fine night she went out in a hired carriage.

She was driven with a rapidity no doubt insisted on by the Abbé, in one or another of the beautiful woods round Paris, Boulogne, Vincennes, Romainville, or Ville-d'Avray, often with Lucien, sometimes alone with Europe. There she could walk about without fear; for when Lucien was not with her, she was attended by a servant dressed like the smartest of outriders, armed with a real knife, whose face and brawny build alike proclaimed him a ruthless athlete. This protector was also provided, in the fashion of English footmen, with a stick, but such as single-stick players use, with which they can keep off more than one assailant. In obedience to an order of the Abbé's, Esther had never spoken a word to this escort. When Madame wished to go home, Europe gave a call; the man in waiting whistled to the driver, who was always within hearing.

When Lucien was walking with Esther, Europe and this man remained about a hundred paces behind, like two of the infernal minions that figure in the *Thousand and One Nights*, which enchanters place at the service of their devotees.

The men, and yet more the women of Paris, know nothing of the charm of a walk in the woods on a fine night. The stillness, the moonlight effects, the solitude, have the soothing effect of a bath. Esther usually went out at ten, walked about from midnight till one o'clock, and came in at half-past two. It was never daylight in her rooms till eleven. She then bathed and went through the elaborate toilet which is unknown to most women, for it takes up too much time, and is rarely carried out by any but courtesans, women of the town, or fine ladies who have the day before them. She was only just ready when Lucien came, and appeared before him as a newly opened flower. Her only care was that her poet should be happy; she was his toy, his chattel; she gave him entire liberty. She never cast a glance beyond the circle where she shone. On this the Abbé

had insisted, for it was part of his profound policy that Lucien should have gallant adventures.

Happiness has no history, and the story-tellers of all lands have understood this so well that the words, 'They were happy,' are the end of every love tale. Hence only the ways and means can be recorded of this really romantic happiness in the heart of Paris. It was happiness in its loveliest form, a poem, a symphony, of four years' duration. Every woman will exclaim, 'That was much!' Neither Esther nor Lucien had ever said, 'This is too much!' And the formula, 'They were happy,' was more emphatically true than even in a fairy tale, for 'they had *no* children.'

So Lucien could coquet with the world, give way to his poet's caprices, and, it may be plainly admitted, to the necessities of his position. All this time he was slowly making his way, and was able to render secret service to certain political personages by helping them in their work. In such matters he was eminently discreet. He cultivated Madame de Sérizy's circle, being, it was rumoured, on the very best terms with that lady. Madame de Sérizy had carried him off from the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who, it was said, had 'thrown him over,' one of the phrases by which women avenge themselves on happiness they envy. Lucien was in the lap, so to speak, of the High Almoner's set, and intimate with women who were the Archbishop's personal friends. He was modest and reserved; he waited patiently. So de Marsay's speech—de Marsay was now married, and made his wife live as retired a life as Esther—was significant in more ways than one.

But the sub-marine perils of such a course as Lucien's will be sufficiently obvious in the course of this chronicle.

Matters were in this position when, one fine night in August, the Baron de Nucingen was driving back to Paris from the country residence of a foreign banker,

settled in France, with whom he had been dining. The estate lay at eight leagues from Paris in the district of la Brie. Now, the Baron's coachman having undertaken to drive his master there and back with his own horses, at nightfall ventured to moderate the pace.

As they entered the forest of Vincennes the position of beast, man, and master was as follows:—The coachman, liberally soaked in the kitchen of the aristocrat of the Bourse, was perfectly tipsy, and slept soundly, while still holding the reins to deceive other wayfarers. The footman, seated behind, was snoring like a wooden top from Germany—the land of little carved figures, of large wine-vats, and of humming-tops. The Baron had tried to think; but after passing the bridge at Gournay, the soft somnolence of digestion had sealed his eyes. The horses understood the coachman's plight from the slackness of the reins; they heard the footman's *basso continuo* from his perch behind; they saw that they were masters of the situation, and took advantage of their few minutes' freedom to make their own pace. Like intelligent slaves, they gave highway robbers the chance of plundering one of the richest capitalists in France, the most deeply cunning of the race which, in France, have been energetically styled lynxes—*loups-cerviers*. Finally, being independent of control, and tempted by the curiosity which every one must have remarked in domestic animals, they stopped where four roads met, face to face with some other horses, whom they, no doubt, asked in horses' language: 'Who may you be? What are you doing? Are you comfortable?'

When the chaise stopped, the Baron awoke from his nap. At first he fancied that he was still in his friend's park; then he was startled by a celestial vision, which found him unarmed with his usual weapon—self-interest. The moonlight was brilliant; he could have read by it—even an evening paper. In the silence of the forest, under this pure light, the Baron saw a woman, alone,

who, as she got into a hired chaise, looked at the strange spectacle of this sleep-stricken carriage. At the sight of this angel the Baron felt as though a light had flashed into glory within him. The young lady, seeing herself admired, pulled down her veil with terrified haste. The man-servant gave a signal which the driver perfectly understood, for the vehicle went off like an arrow.

The old banker was fearfully agitated; the blood left his feet cold and carried fire to his brain, his head sent the flame back to his heart; he was choking. The unhappy man foresaw a fit of indigestion, but in spite of that supreme terror he stood up.

'Follow qvick, fery qvick.—Tam you, you are ashleep!' he cried. 'A hundert franc if you catch up dat chaise.'

At the words 'A hundred francs,' the coachman woke up. The servant behind heard them, no doubt, in his dreams. The Baron reiterated his orders, the coachman urged the horses to a gallop, and at the Barrière du Trône had succeeded in overtaking a carriage resembling that in which Nucingen had seen the divine fair one, but which contained a swaggering head-clerk from some first-class shop and a lady of the Rue Vivienne.

This blunder filled the Baron with consternation.

'If only I had prought Chorge inshtead of you, shtupid fool, he shall have fount dat voman,' said he to the servant, while the excise officers were searching the carriage.

'Indeed, Monsieur le Baron, the devil was behind the chaise, I believe, disguised as an armed escort, and he sent this chaise instead of hers.'

'Dere is no such ting as de Teufel,' said the Baron.

The Baron de Nucingen owned to sixty; he no longer cared for women, and for his wife least of all. He boasted that he had never known such love as makes a fool of a man. He declared that he was happy to have done with women; the most angelic of them, he frankly said, was not worth what she cost, even if you got her for nothing. He was supposed to be so entirely blasé, that he no

longer paid two thousand francs a month for the pleasure of being deceived. His eyes looked coldly down from his opera box on the corps de ballet; never a glance was shot at the capitalist by any one of that formidable swarm of old young girls and young old women, the cream of Paris pleasure.

Natural love, artificial and love-of-show love, love based on self-esteem and vanity, love as a display of taste, decent, conjugal love, eccentric love—the Baron had paid for them all, had known them all excepting real spontaneous love. This passion had now pounced down on him like an eagle on its prey, as it did on Gentz, the confidential friend of His Highness the Prince of Metternich. All the world knows what follies the old diplomate committed for Fanny Elssler, whose rehearsals took up a great deal more of his time than the concerns of Europe.

The woman who had just overthrown that iron-bound money-box, called Nucingen, had appeared to him as one of those who are unique in their generation. It is not certain that Titian's mistress, or Leonardo da Vinci's Monna Lisa, or Raphael's Fornarina were as beautiful as this exquisite Esther, in whom not the most practised eye of the most experienced Parisian could have detected the faintest trace of the ordinary courtesan. The Baron was especially startled by the noble and stately air, the air of a well-born woman, which Esther, beloved, and lapped in luxury, elegance, and devotedness, had in the highest degree. Happy love is the divine unction of women; it makes them all as lofty as empresses.

For eight nights in succession the Baron went to the forest of Vincennes, then to the Bois de Boulogne, to the woods of Ville-d'Avray, to Meudon, in short, everywhere in the neighbourhood of Paris, but failed to meet Esther. That beautiful Jewish face, which he called 'a face out of te Biple,' was always before his eyes. By the end of a fortnight he had lost his appetite.

Delphine de Nucingen, and her daughter Augusta, whom the Baroness was now taking out, did not at first perceive the change that had come over the Baron. The mother and daughter only saw him at breakfast in the morning and at dinner in the evening, when they all dined at home, and this was only on the evenings when Delphine received company. But by the end of two months, tortured by a fever of impatience, and in a state like that produced by acute home-sickness, the Baron, amazed to find his millions impotent, grew so thin, and seemed so seriously ill, that Delphine had secret hopes of finding herself a widow. She pitied her husband, somewhat hypocritically, and kept her daughter in seclusion. She bored her husband with questions; he answered as Englishmen answer when suffering from spleen, hardly a word.

Delphine de Nucingen gave a grand dinner every Sunday. She had chosen that day for her receptions, after observing that no people of fashion went to the play, and that the day was pretty generally an open one. The emancipation of the shopkeeping and middle classes makes Sunday almost as tiresome in Paris as it is deadly in London. So the Baroness invited the famous Desplein to dinner, to consult him in spite of the sick man, for Nucingen persisted in asserting that he was perfectly well.

Keller, Rastignac, de Marsay, du Tillet, all their friends had made the Baroness understand that a man like Nucingen could not be allowed to die without any notice being taken of it; his enormous business transactions demanded some care; it was absolutely necessary to know where he stood. These gentlemen also were asked to dinner, and the Comte de Gondreville, François Keller's father-in-law, the Chevalier d'Espard, des Lupeaulx, Doctor Bianchon—Desplein's best beloved pupil—Beaudenord and his wife, the Comte and Comtesse de Montcornet, Blondet, Mademoiselle des Touches and

Conti, and finally, Lucien de Rubempré, for whom Rastignac had for the last five years manifested the warmest regard—by order, as the advertisements have it.

'We shall not find it easy to get rid of that young fellow,' said Blondet to Rastignac, when he saw Lucien come in handsomer than ever, and uncommonly well dressed.

'It is wiser to make friends with him, for he is formidable,' said Rastignac.

'He?' said de Marsay. 'No one is formidable to my knowledge but men whose position is assured, and his is unattacked rather than unattackable! Look here, what does he live on? Where does his money come from? He has, I am certain, sixty thousand francs in debts.'

'He has found a friend in a very rich Spanish priest who has taken a fancy to him,' replied Rastignac.

'He is going to be married to the eldest Mademoiselle de Grandlieu,' said Mademoiselle des Touches.

'Yes,' said the Chevalier d'Espard, 'but they require him to buy an estate worth thirty thousand francs a year as security for the fortune he is to settle on the young lady, and for that he needs a million francs, which are not to be found in any Spaniard's shoes.'

'That is dear, for Clotilde is very ugly,' said the Baroness.

Madame de Nucingen affected to call Mademoiselle de Grandlieu by her Christian name, as though she, *née* Goriot, frequented that society.

'No,' replied du Tillet, 'the daughter of a duchess is never ugly to the like of us, especially when she brings with her the title of Marquis and a diplomatic appointment. But the great obstacle to the marriage is Madame de Sérizy's insane passion for Lucien. She must give him a great deal of money.'

'Then I am not surprised at seeing Lucien so serious; for Madame de Sérizy will certainly not give him a million francs to help him to marry Mademoiselle de

Grandlieu. He probably sees no way out of the scrape,' said de Marsay.

'But Mademoiselle de Grandlieu worships him,' said the Comtesse de Montcornet; 'and with the young person's assistance, he may perhaps make better terms.'

'And what will he do with his sister and brother-in-law at Angoulême?' asked the Chevalier d'Espard.

'Well, his sister is rich,' replied Rastignac, 'and he now speaks of her as Madame Séchard de Marsac.'

'Whatever difficulties there may be, he is a very good-looking fellow,' said Bianchon, rising to greet Lucien.

'How 'do, my dear fellow?' said Rastignac, shaking hands warmly with Lucien.

De Marsay bowed coldly after Lucien had first bowed to him.

Before dinner Desplein and Bianchon, who studied the Baron while amusing him, convinced themselves that his malady was entirely nervous; but neither could guess the cause, so impossible did it seem that this great politician of the money market could be in love. When Bianchon, seeing nothing but love to account for the banker's condition, hinted as much to Delphine de Nucingen, she smiled as a woman who has long known all her husband's weaknesses. After dinner, however, when they all adjourned to the garden, the more intimate of the party gathered round the banker, eager to clear up this extraordinary case when they heard Bianchon pronounce that Nucingen must be in love.

'Do you know, Baron,' said de Marsay, 'that you have grown very thin? You are suspected of violating the laws of financial Nature.'

'Ach, nefer!' said the Baron.

'Yes, yes,' replied de Marsay. 'They dare to say that you are in love.'

'Dat is true,' replied Nucingen piteously; 'I am in lof for somebody I do not know.'

'You, in love, you? You are a coxcomb!' said the Chevalier d'Espard.

'In lof, at my aje! I know dat is too ridicilous. But vat can I help it? Dat is so.'

'A woman of the world?' asked Lucien.

'Nay,' said de Marsay. 'The Baron would not grow so thin but for a hopeless love, and he has money enough to buy all the women who will or can sell themselves!'

'I do not know who she is,' said the Baron. 'And as Motame de Nucingen is inside de trawing-room, I may say so, dat till now I have nefer known what it is to lof. Lof! I tink it is to grow tin.'

'And where did you meet this innocent daisy?' asked Rastignac.

'In a carriage, at mitnight, in de forest of Fincennes.'

'Describe her,' said de Marsay.

'A vhite gaze hat, a rose gown, a vhite scharf, a vhite feil—a face yust out of de Biple. Eyes like feuer, an Eastern colour——'

'You were dreaming,' said Lucien, with a smile.

'Dat is true; I vas shleeping like a pig—a pig mit his shkin full,' he added, 'for I vas on my vay home from tinner at mine friends——'

'Was she alone?' said du Tillet, interrupting him.

'Ja,' said the Baron dolefully; 'but she had ein *heiduque* behind dat carriage and a maid-shervant——'

'Lucien looks as if he knew her,' exclaimed Rastignac, seeing Esther's lover smile.

'Who doesn't know the woman who would go out at midnight to meet Nucingen?' said Lucien, turning on his heel.

'Well, she is not a woman who is seen in society, or the Baron would have recognised the man,' said the Chevalier d'Espard.

'I have nefer seen him,' replied the Baron. 'And

for forty days now I have had her seeked for by de Police, and dey do not find her.'

'It is better that she should cost you a few hundred francs than cost you your life,' said Desplein; 'and, at your age, a passion without hope is dangerous, you might die of it.'

'Ja, ja,' replied the Baron, addressing Desplein. 'And vat I eat does me no goot, de air I breade feels to choke me. I go to de forest of Fincennes to see de place vat I see her—and dat is all my life. I could not tink of de last loan—I trust to my partners vat haf pity on me. I could pay one million franc to see dat voman—and I should gain by dat, for I do nothing on de Bourse.—Ask du Tillet.'

'Very true,' replied du Tillet; 'he hates business; he is quite unlike himself; it is a sign of death.'

'A sign of lof,' replied Nucingen; 'and for me, dat is all de same ting.'

The simple candour of the old man, no longer the stock-jobber, who, for the first time in his life, saw that something was more sacred and more precious than gold, really moved these world-hardened men; some exchanged smiles; others looked at Nucingen with an expression that plainly said, 'Such a man to have come to this!'—And then they all returned to the drawing-room, talking over the event.

For it was indeed an event calculated to produce the greatest sensation. Madame de Nucingen went into fits of laughter when Lucien betrayed her husband's secret; but the Baron, when he heard his wife's sarcasms, took her by the arm and led her into the recess of a window.

'Motame,' said he in an undertone, 'have I ever laughed at all at your passions, that you should laugh at mine? A goot frau should help her husband out of his difficulty vidout making game of him like vat you do.'

From the description given by the old banker, Lucien

had recognised his Esther. Much annoyed that his smile should have been observed, he took advantage of a moment when coffee was served, and the conversation became general, to vanish from the scene.

'What has become of Monsieur de Rubempré?' said the Baroness.

'He is faithful to his motto: *Quid me continebit?*' said Rastignac.

'Which means "Who can detain me?" or "I am unconquerable," as you choose,' added de Marsay.

'Just as Monsieur le Baron was speaking of his unknown lady, Lucien smiled in a way that makes me fancy he may know her,' said Horace Bianchon, not thinking how dangerous such a natural remark might be.

'Goot!' said the banker to himself.

Like all incurables, the Baron clutched at everything that seemed at all hopeful; he promised himself that he would have Lucien watched by some one besides Louchard and his men—Louchard, the sharpest commercial detective in Paris—to whom he had applied about a fortnight since.

Before going home to Esther, Lucien was due at the Hôtel Grandlieu, to spend the two hours which made Mademoiselle Clotilde Frédérique de Grandlieu the happiest girl in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. But the prudence characteristic of this ambitious youth warned him to inform Carlos Herrera forthwith of the effect resulting from the smile wrung from him by the Baron's description of Esther. The banker's passion for Esther, and the idea that had occurred to him of setting the police to seek the unknown beauty, were indeed events of sufficient importance to be at once communicated to the man who had sought, under a priest's robe, the shelter which criminals of old could find in a church. And Lucien's road from the Rue Saint-Lazare, where Nucingen at that time lived, to the Rue Saint-Dominique,

where was the Hôtel Grandlieu, led him past his lodgings on the Quai Malaquais.

Lucien found his formidable friend smoking his breviary—that is to say, colouring a short pipe before retiring to bed. The man, strange rather than foreign, had given up Spanish cigarettes, finding them too mild.

'Matters look serious,' said the Spaniard, when Lucien had told him all. 'The Baron, who employs Louchard to hunt up the girl, will certainly be sharp enough to set a spy at your heels, and everything will come out. To-night and to-morrow morning will not give me more than enough time to pack the cards for the game I must play against the Baron; first and foremost, I must prove to him that the police cannot help him. When our lynx has given up all hope of finding his ewe-lamb, I will undertake to sell her for all she is worth to him——'

'Sell Esther!' cried Lucien, whose first impulse was always the right one.

'Do you forget where we stand?' cried Carlos Herrera.

Lucien hung his head.

'No money left,' the Spaniard went on, 'and sixty thousand francs of debts to be paid! If you want to marry Clotilde de Grandlieu, you must invest a million of francs in land as security for that ugly creature's settlement. Well, then, Esther is the quarry I mean to set before that lynx to help us to ease him of that million. That is my concern.'

'Esther will never——'

'That is my concern.'

'She will die of it.'

'That is the undertaker's concern. Besides, what then?' cried the savage, checking Lucien's lamentations merely by his attitude. 'How many generals died in the prime of life for the Emperor Napoleon?' he asked, after a short silence. 'There are always plenty of

women. In 1821 Coralie was unique in your eyes; and yet you found Esther. After her will come—do you know who?—the unknown fair. And she of all women is the fairest, and you will find her in the capital where the Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law will be Minister and representative of the King of France.—And do you tell me now, great Baby, that Esther will die of it? Again, can Mademoiselle de Grandlieu's husband keep Esther?

'You have only to leave everything to me; you need not take the trouble to think at all; that is my concern. Only you must do without Esther for a week or two; but go to the Rue Taitbout, all the same.—Come, be off to bill and coo on your plank of salvation, and play your part well; slip the flaming note you wrote this morning into Clotilde's hand, and bring me back a warm response. She will recompense herself for many woes in writing. I take to that girl.

'You will find Esther a little depressed, but tell her to obey. We must display our livery of virtue, our doublet of honesty, the screen behind which all great men hide their infamy.—I must show off my handsomer self—you must never be suspected. Chance has served us better than my brain, which has been beating about in a void for these two months past.'

All the while he was jerking out these dreadful sentences, one by one, like pistol shots, Carlos Herrera was dressing himself to go out.

'You are evidently delighted,' cried Lucien. 'You never liked poor Esther, and you look forward with joy to the moment when you will be rid of her.'

'You have never tired of loving her, have you? Well, I have never tired of detesting her. But have I not always behaved as though I were sincerely attached to the hussy—I, who, through Asie, hold her life in my hands? A few bad mushrooms in a stew—and there an end. But Mademoiselle Esther still lives!—and is happy!—And do you know why? Because you love

her. Do not be a fool. For four years we have been waiting for a chance to turn up, for us or against us; well, it will take something more than mere cleverness to wash the cabbage luck has flung at us now. There are good and bad together in this turn of the wheel—as there are in everything. Do you know what I was thinking of just when you came in?'

'No.'

'Of making myself heir here, as I did at Barcelona, to an old bigot, by Asie's help.'

'A crime?'

'I saw no other way of securing your fortune. The creditors are making a stir. If once the bailiffs were at your heels, and you were turned out of the Hôtel Grandlieu, where would you be? There would be the devil to pay then.'

And Carlos Herrera, by a pantomimic gesture, showed the suicide of a man throwing himself into the water; then he fixed on Lucien one of those steady, piercing looks by which the will of a strong man is injected, so to speak, into a weak one. This fascinating glare, which relaxed all Lucien's fibres of resistance, revealed the existence not merely of secrets of life and death between him and his adviser, but also of feelings as far above ordinary feeling as the man himself was above his vile position.

Carlos Herrera, a man at once ignoble and magnanimous, obscure and famous, compelled to live out of the world from which the law had banned him, exhausted by vice and by frenzied and terrible struggles, though endowed with powers of mind that ate into his soul, consumed especially by a fever of vitality, now lived again in the elegant person of Lucien de Rubempré, whose soul had become his own. He was represented in social life by the poet, to whom he lent his tenacity and iron will. To him Lucien was more than a son, more than a woman beloved, more than a family, more than his life; he was his revenge; and as souls cling

more closely to a feeling than to existence, he had bound the young man to him by insoluble ties.

After rescuing Lucien's life at the moment when the poet in desperation was on the verge of suicide, he had proposed to him one of those infernal bargains which are heard of only in romances, but of which the hideous possibility has often been proved in courts of justice by celebrated criminal dramas. While lavishing on Lucien all the delights of Paris life, and proving to him that he yet had a great future before him, he had made him his chattel.

But, indeed, no sacrifice was too great for this strange man when it was to gratify his second self. With all his strength, he was so weak to this creature of his making that he had even told him all his secrets. Perhaps this abstract complicity was a bond the more between them.

Since the day when La Torpille had been snatched away, Lucien had known on what a vile foundation his good fortune rested. That priest's robe covered Jacques Collin, a man famous on the hulks, who ten years since had lived under the homely name of Vautrin in the Maison Vauquer, where Rastignac and Bianchon were at that time boarders.

Jacques Collin, known as *Trompe-la-Mort*, had escaped from Rochefort almost as soon as he was recaptured, profiting by the example of the famous Comte de Sainte-Hélène, while modifying all that was ill planned in Coignard's daring scheme. To take the place of an honest man and carry on the convict's career is a proposition of which the two terms are too contradictory for a disastrous outcome not to be inevitable, especially in Paris; for, by establishing himself in a family, a convict multiplies tenfold the perils of such a substitution. And to be safe from all investigation, must not a man assume a position far above the ordinary interests of life. A man of the world is subject to risks such as rarely

trouble those who have no contact with the world; hence the priest's gown is the safest disguise when it can be authenticated by an exemplary life in solitude and inactivity.

'So a priest I will be,' said the legally dead man, who was quite determined to resuscitate as a figure in the world, and to satisfy passions as strange as himself.

The civil war caused by the Constitution of 1812 in Spain, whither this energetic man had betaken himself, enabled him to murder secretly the real Carlos Herrera from an ambush. This ecclesiastic, the bastard son of a grandee, long since deserted by his father, and not knowing to what woman he owed his birth, was intrusted by King Ferdinand VII., to whom a bishop had recommended him, with a political mission to France. The bishop, the only man who took any interest in Carlos Herrera, died while this foundling son of the Church was on his journey from Cadiz to Madrid, and from Madrid to France. Delighted to have met with this longed-for opportunity, and under the most desirable conditions, Jacques Collin scored his back to efface the fatal letters, and altered his complexion by the use of chemicals. Thus metamorphosing himself face to face with the corpse, he contrived to achieve some likeness to his Sosia. And to complete a change almost as marvellous as that related in the Arabian tale, where a dervish has acquired the power, old as he is, of entering into a young body, by a magic spell, the convict, who spoke Spanish, learnt as much Latin as an Andalusian priest need know.

As banker to three hulks, Collin was rich in the cash intrusted to his known, and indeed enforced, honesty. Among such company a mistake is paid for by a dagger thrust. To this capital he now added the money given by the bishop to Don Carlos Herrera. Then, before leaving Spain, he was able to possess himself of the

treasure of an old bigot at Barcelona, to whom he gave absolution, promising that he would make restitution of the money constituting her fortune, which his penitent had stolen by means of murder.

Jacques Collin, now a priest, and charged with a secret mission which would secure him the most brilliant introductions in Paris, determined to do nothing that might compromise the character he had assumed, and had given himself up to the chances of his new life, when he met Lucien on the road between Angoulême and Paris. In this youth the sham priest saw a wonderful instrument for power; he saved him from suicide, saying—

'Give yourself over to me as to a man of God, as men give themselves over to the devil, and you will have every chance of a new career. You will live as in a dream, and the worst awakening that can come to you will be death, which you now wish to meet.'

The alliance between these two beings, who were to become one, as it were, was based on this substantial reasoning, and Carlos Herrera cemented it by an ingeniously plotted complicity. He had the very genius of corruption, and undermined Lucien's honesty by plunging him into cruel necessity, and extricating him by obtaining his tacit consent to bad or disgraceful actions, which nevertheless left him pure, loyal, and noble in the eyes of the world. Lucien was the social magnificence under whose shadow the forger meant to live.

'I am the author, you are the play; if you fail, it is I who shall be hissed,' said he on the day when he confessed his sacrilegious disguise.

Carlos prudently confessed only a little at a time, measuring the horrors of his revelations by Lucien's progress and needs. Thus *Trompe-la-Mort* did not let out his last secret till the habit of Parisian pleasures and success, and gratified vanity, had enslaved the weak-minded poet body and soul. Where Rastignac, when tempted by this demon, had stood firm, Lucien, better

managed, and more ingeniously compromised, succumbed, conquered especially by his satisfaction in having attained an eminent position. Incarnate evil, whose poetical embodiment is called the Devil, displayed every delightful seduction before this youth, who was half a woman, and at first gave much and asked for little. The great argument used by Carlos was the eternal secret promised by Tartufe to Elmire.

The repeated proofs of absolute devotion, such as that of Saïd to Mahomet, put the finishing touch to the horrible achievement of Lucien's subjugation by a Jacques Collin.

At this moment not only had Esther and Lucien devoured all the funds intrusted to the honesty of the banker of the hulks, who, for their sakes, had rendered himself liable to a dreadful calling to account, but the dandy, the forger, and the courtesan were also in debt. Thus, at the very moment of Lucien's expected success, the smallest pebble under the foot of either of these three persons might involve the ruin of the fantastic structure of fortune so audaciously built up.

At the opera ball Rastignac had recognised the man he had known as Vautrin at Madame Vauquer's; but he knew that if he did not hold his tongue, he was a dead man. So Madame de Nucingen's lover and Lucien had exchanged glances in which fear lurked, on both sides, under an expression of amity. In the moment of danger, Rastignac, it is clear, would have been delighted to provide the vehicle that should convey Jacques Collin to the scaffold. From all this it may be understood that Carlos heard of the Baron's passion with a glow of sombre satisfaction, while he perceived in a single flash all the advantage a man of his temper might derive by means of the hapless Esther.

'Go on,' said he to Lucien. 'The Devil is mindful of his chaplain.'

'You are smoking on a powder barrel.'

'*Incedo per ignes*,' replied Carlos with a smile. 'That is my trade.'

The House of Grandlieu divided into two branches about the middle of the last century: first, the ducal line destined to lapse, since the present duke has only daughters; and then the Vicomtes de Grandlieu, who will now inherit the title and armorial bearings of the elder branch. The ducal house bears *gules*, three broad axes *or* in fess, with the famous motto: *Caveo non timeo*, which epitomises the history of the family.

The coat of the Vicomtes de Grandlieu is the same quartered with that of Navarreins: *gules*, a fess crenelated *or*, surmounted by a knight's helmet, with the motto: *Grands faits, grand lieu*. The present Viscountess, widowed in 1813, has a son and a daughter. Though she returned from the Emigration almost ruined, she recovered a considerable fortune by the zealous aid of Derville the lawyer.

The Duc and Duchesse de Grandlieu, on coming home in 1804, were the object of the Emperor's advances; indeed, Napoleon, seeing them come to his court, restored to them all of the Grandlieu estates that had been confiscated to the nation, to the amount of about forty thousand francs a year. Of all the great nobles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain who allowed themselves to be won over by Napoleon, this Duke and Duchess—she was an Ajuda of the senior branch, and connected with the Braganzas—were the only family who afterwards never disowned him and his liberality. When the Faubourg Saint-Germain remembered this as a crime against the Grandlieus, Louis XVIII. respected them for it; but perhaps his only object was to annoy MONSIEUR.

A marriage was considered likely between the young Vicomte de Grandlieu and Marie-Athénaïs, the Duke's youngest daughter, now nine years old. Sabine, the youngest but one, married the Baron du Guénic after

the revolution of July 1830; Joséphine, the third, became Madame d'Ajuda-Pinto after the death of the Marquis's first wife, Mademoiselle de Rochefide, or Rochegude. The eldest had taken the veil in 1822. The second, Mademoiselle Clotilde Frédérique, at this time seven-and-twenty years of age, was deeply in love with Lucien de Rubempré. It need not be asked whether the Duc de Grandlieu's mansion, one of the finest in the Rue Saint-Dominique, did not exert a thousand spells over Lucien's imagination. Every time the heavy gate turned on its hinges to admit his cab, he experienced the gratified vanity to which Mirabeau confessed.

'Though my father was a mere druggist at l'Houmeau, I may enter here!' This was his thought.

And, indeed, he would have committed far worse crimes than allying himself with a forger to preserve his right to mount the steps of that entrance, to hear himself announced, 'Monsieur de Rubempré' at the door of the fine Louis XIV. drawing-room, decorated in the time of the *grand monarque* on the pattern of those at Versailles, where that choicest circle met, that cream of Paris society, called then *le petit château*.

The noble Portuguese lady, one of those who never care to go out of their own home, was usually the centre of her neighbours' attentions—the Chaulieus, the Navarreins, the Lenoncourts. The pretty Baronne de Macumer—*née* de Chaulieu—the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, Madame d'Espard, Madame de Camps, and Mademoiselle des Touches—a connection of the Grandlieus, who are a Breton family—were frequent visitors on their way to a ball or on their return from the opera. The Vicomte de Grandlieu, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Marquis de Chaulieu—afterwards Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu—his wife, Madeleine de Mortsauf, the Duc de Lenoncourt's grand-daughter, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, the Prince de Blamont-Chauvry, the Marquis de

Beauséant, the Vidame de Pamiers, the Vandenesses, the old Prince de Cadignan, and his son the Duc de Maufrigneuse, were constantly to be seen in this stately drawing-room, where they breathed the atmosphere of a Court, where manners, tone, and wit were in harmony with the dignity of the Master and Mistress whose aristocratic mien and magnificence had obliterated the memory of their servility to Napoleon.

The old Duchesse d'Uxelles, mother of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, was the oracle of this circle, to which Madame de Sérizy had never gained admittance, though *née* de Ronquerolles.

Lucien was brought thither by Madame de Maufrigneuse, who had won over her mother to speak in his favour, for she had doted on him for two years; and the engaging young poet had kept his footing there, thanks to the influence of the high Almoner of France, and the support of the Archbishop of Paris. Still, he had not been admitted till he had obtained the patent restoring to him the name and arms of the Rubempré family. The Duc de Rhétoré, the Chevalier d'Espard, and some others, jealous of Lucien, periodically stirred up the Duc de Grandlieu's prejudices against him by retailing anecdotes of the young man's previous career; but the Duchess, a devout Catholic surrounded by the great prelates of the Church, and her daughter Clotilde would not give him up.

Lucien accounted for these hostilities by his connection with Madame de Bargeton, Madame d'Espard's cousin, and now Comtesse du Châtelet. Then, feeling the importance of allying himself with so powerful a family, and urged by his privy adviser to win Clotilde, Lucien found the courage of the *parvenu*; he came to the house five days in the week, he swallowed all the affronts of the envious, he endured impertinent looks, and answered irony with wit. His persistency, the charm of his manners, and his amiability, at last

neutralised opposition and reduced obstacles. He was still in the highest favour with Madame de Maufrigneuse, whose ardent letters, written under the influence of her passion, were preserved by Carlos Herrera ; he was idolised by Madame de Sérizy, and stood well in Mademoiselle des Touches' good graces ; and well content with being received in these houses, Lucien was instructed by the Abbé to be as reserved as possible in all other quarters.

'You cannot devote yourself to several houses at once,' said his Mentor. 'The man who goes everywhere finds no one to take a lively interest in him. Great folks only patronise those who emulate their furniture, whom they see every day, and who have the art of becoming as necessary to them as the seat they sit on.'

Thus Lucien, accustomed to regard the Grandlieus' drawing-room as his arena, reserved his wit, his jests, his news, and his courtier's graces for the hours he spent there every evening. Insinuating, tactful, and warned by Clotilde of the shoals he should avoid, he flattered Monsieur de Grandlieu's little weaknesses. Clotilde, having begun by envying Madame de Maufrigneuse her happiness, ended by falling desperately in love with Lucien.

Perceiving all the advantages of such a connection, Lucien played his lover's part as well as it could have been acted by Armand, the latest *jeune premier* at the *Comédie Française*. He wrote to Clotilde, letters which were certainly masterpieces of literary workmanship ; and Clotilde replied, vieing with him in genius in the expression of perfervid love on paper, for she had no other outlet. Lucien went to church at Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin every Sunday, giving himself out as a devout Catholic, and he poured forth monarchical and pious harangues which were a marvel to all. He also wrote some exceedingly remarkable articles in papers devoted to the 'Congregation,' refusing to be paid for them, and

signing them only with an 'L.' He produced political pamphlets when required by King Charles x. or the High Almoner, and for these he would take no payment.

'The King,' he would say, 'has done so much for me, that I owe him my blood.'

For some days past there had been an idea of attaching Lucien to the prime minister's cabinet as his private secretary; but Madame d'Espard brought so many persons into the field in opposition to Lucien, that Charles x.'s *Maître Jacques* hesitated to clinch the matter. Nor was Lucien's position by any means clear; not only did the question, 'What does he live on?' on everybody's lips as the young man rose in life, require an answer, but even benevolent curiosity—as much as malevolent curiosity—went on from one inquiry to another, and found more than one joint in the ambitious youth's harness.

Clotilde de Grandlieu unconsciously served as a spy for her father and mother. A few days since she had led Lucien into a recess and told him of the difficulties raised by her family.

'Invest a million francs in land, and my hand is yours: that is my mother's ultimatum,' Clotilde had explained.

'And presently they will ask you where you got the money,' said Carlos, when Lucien reported this last word in the bargain.

'My brother-in-law will have made his fortune,' remarked Lucien; 'we can make him the responsible backer.'

'Then only the million is needed,' said Carlos. 'I will think it over.'

To be exact as to Lucien's position in the Hôtel Grandlieu, he had never dined there. Neither Clotilde, nor the Duchesse d'Uxelles, nor Madame de Maufrigneuse, who was always extremely kind to Lucien, could ever obtain this favour from the Duke, so persistently

suspicious was the old nobleman of the man he designated as 'le Sire de Rubempré.' This shade of distinction, understood by every one who visited at the house, constantly wounded Lucien's self-respect, for he felt that he was no more than tolerated. But the world is justified in being suspicious; it is so often taken in!

To cut a figure in Paris with no known source of wealth and no recognised employment is a position which can by no artifice be long maintained. So Lucien, as he crept up in the world, gave more and more weight to the question, 'What does he live on?' He had been obliged indeed to confess to Madame de Sérizy, to whom he owed the patronage of Monsieur Granville, the Public Prosecutor, and of the Comte Octave de Bauvan, a Minister of State, and President of one of the Supreme Courts: 'I am dreadfully in debt.'

As he entered the courtyard of the mansion where he found an excuse for all his vanities, he was saying to himself as he reflected on Trompe-la-Mort's scheming—

'I can hear the ground cracking under my feet!'

He loved Esther, and he wanted to marry Mademoiselle de Grandlieu! A strange dilemma! One must be sold to buy the other.

Only one person could effect this bargain without damage to Lucien's honour, and that was the supposed Spaniard. Were they not bound to be equally secret, each for the other? Such a compact, in which each is in turn master and slave, is not to be found twice in any one life.

Lucien drove away the clouds that darkened his brow, and walked into the Grandlieu drawing-room gay and beaming. At this moment the windows were open, the fragrance from the garden scented the room, the flower-basket in the centre displayed its pyramid of flowers. The Duchess, seated on a sofa in the corner, was talking to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Several women together formed a group remarkable for their various attitudes,

stamped with the different expression which each strove to give to an affected sorrow. In the fashionable world nobody takes any interest in grief or suffering; everything is talk. The men were walking up and down the room or in the garden. Clotilde and Joséphine were busy at the tea-table. The Vidame de Pamiers, the Duc de Grandlieu, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, and the Duc de Maufrigneuse were playing *Wisk*, as they called it, in a corner of the room.

When Lucien was announced he walked across the room to make his bow to the Duchess, asking the cause of the grief he could read in her face.

'Madame de Chaulieu has just had dreadful news; her son-in-law, the Baron de Macumer, ex-duke of Soria, is just dead. The young Duc de Soria and his wife, who had gone to Chantepleurs to nurse their brother, have written this sad intelligence. Louise is heart-broken.'

'A woman is not loved twice in her life as Louise was loved by her husband,' said Madeleine de Mortsauf.

'She will be a rich widow,' observed the old Duchesse d'Uxelles, looking at Lucien, whose face showed no change of expression.

'Poor Louise!' said Madame d'Espard. 'I understand her and pity her.'

The Marquise d'Espard put on the pensive look of a woman full of soul and feeling. Sabine de Grandlieu, who was but ten years old, raised knowing eyes to her mother's face, but the satirical glance was repressed by a glance from the Duchess. This is bringing children up properly.

'If my daughter lives through the shock,' said Madame de Chaulieu, with a very maternal manner, 'I shall be anxious about her future life. Louise is so very romantic.

'It is so difficult nowadays,' said a venerable Cardinal, 'to reconcile feeling with the proprieties.'

Lucien, who had not a word to say, went to the tea-table to do what was polite to the demoiselles de Grandlieu.

When the poet had gone a few yards away, the Marquise d'Espard leaned over to whisper in the Duchess's ear—

'And do you really think that that young fellow is so much in love with your Clotilde?'

The perfidy of this question cannot be fully understood but with the help of a sketch of Clotilde. That young lady was, at this moment, standing up. Her attitude allowed the Marquise d'Espard's mocking eye to take in Clotilde's lean, narrow figure, exactly like an asparagus stalk; the poor girl's bust was so flat that it did not allow of the artifice known to dressmakers as *fichus menteurs*, or padded habitshirts. And Clotilde, who knew that her name was a sufficient advantage in life, far from trying to conceal this defect, heroically made a display of it. By wearing plain, tight dresses she achieved the effect of that stiff prim shape which mediæval sculptors succeeded in giving to the statuettes whose profiles are conspicuous against the background of the niches in which they stand in cathedrals.

Clotilde was more than five feet four in height; if we may be allowed to use a familiar phrase, which has the merit at any rate of being perfectly intelligible—she was all legs. These defective proportions gave her figure an almost deformed appearance. With a dark complexion, harsh black hair, very thick eyebrows, fiery eyes, set in sockets that were already deeply discoloured, a side face shaped like the moon in its first quarter, and a prominent brow, she was the caricature of her mother, one of the handsomest women in Portugal. Nature amuses herself with such tricks. Often we see in one family a sister of wonderful beauty, whose features in her brother are absolutely hideous, though the two are amazingly alike. Clotilde's lips, excessively thin and sunken, wore a permanent expression of disdain. And yet her mouth, better than any other feature of her face, revealed every secret impulse of her heart, for affection lent it a sweet expression, which was all the more remarkable because

her cheeks were too sallow for blushes, and her hard, black eyes never told anything. Notwithstanding these defects, notwithstanding her board-like carriage, she had by birth and education a grand air, a proud demeanour, in short, everything that has been well named *le je ne sais quoi*, due partly, perhaps, to her uncompromising simplicity of dress, which stamped her as a woman of noble blood. She dressed her hair to advantage, and it might be accounted to her for a beauty, for it grew vigorously, thick and long.

She had cultivated her voice, and it could cast a spell; she sang exquisitely. Clotilde was just the woman of whom one says, 'She has fine eyes,' or, 'She has a delightful temper.' If any one addressed her in the English fashion as 'Your Grace,' she would say, 'You mean "Your leanness."'

'Why should not my poor Clotilde have a lover?' replied the Duchess to the Marquise. 'Do you know what she said to me yesterday? "If I am loved for ambition's sake, I undertake to make him love me for my own sake."—She is clever and ambitious, and there are men who like those two qualities. As for him—my dear, he is as handsome as a vision; and if he can but repurchase the Rubempré estates, out of regard for us the King will reinstate him in the title of Marquis.—After all, his mother was the last of the Rubemprés.'

'Poor fellow! where is he to find a million francs?' said the Marquise.

'That is no concern of ours,' replied the Duchess. 'He is certainly incapable of stealing the money.—Besides, we would never give Clotilde to an intriguing or dishonest man even if he were handsome, young, and a poet, like Monsieur de Rubempré.'

'You are late this evening,' said Clotilde, smiling at Lucien with infinite graciousness.

'Yes, I have been dining out.'

'You have been quite gay these last few days,' said

she, concealing her jealousy and anxiety behind a smile.

'Quite gay?' replied Lucien. 'No—only by the merest chance I have been dining every day this week with bankers; to-day with the Nucingens, yesterday with du Tillet, the day before with the Kellers——'

Whence, it may be seen, that Lucien had succeeded in assuming the tone of light impertinence of great people.

'You have many enemies,' said Clotilde, offering him —how graciously!—a cup of tea. 'Some one told my father that you have debts to the amount of sixty thousand francs, and that before long Sainte-Pélagie will be your summer quarters.—If you could know what all these calumnies are to me!—It all recoils on me.—I say nothing of my own suffering—my father has a way of looking that crucifies me—but of what you must be suffering if any least part of it should be the truth.'

'Do not let such nonsense worry you; love me as I love you, and give me time—a few months——' said Lucien, replacing his empty cup on the silver tray.

'Do not let my father see you; he would say something disagreeable; and as you could not submit to that, we should be done for.—That odious Marquise d'Espard told him that your mother had been a monthly nurse and that your sister did ironing——'

'We were in the most abject poverty,' replied Lucien, the tears rising to his eyes. 'That is not calumny, but it is most ill-natured gossip. My sister now is a more than millionaire, and my mother has been dead two years.—This information has been kept in stock to use just when I should be on the verge of success here——'

'But what have you done to Madame d'Espard?'

'I was so rash, at Madame de Sérizy's, as to tell the story, with some added pleasantries, in the presence of MM. de Bauvan and de Granville, of her attempt to get a commission of lunacy appointed to sit on her husband,

the Marquis d'Espard. Bianchon had told it to me. Monsieur de Granville's opinion, supported by those of Bauvan and Sérizy, influenced the decision of the Keeper of the Seals. They all were afraid of the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, and dreaded the scandal, and the Marquise got her knuckles rapped in the summing up for the judgment finally recorded in that miserable business.

'Though M. de Sérizy by his tattle has made the Marquise my mortal foe, I gained his good offices, and those of the Public Prosecutor, and Comte Octave de Bauvan; for Madame de Sérizy told them the danger in which I stood in consequence of their allowing the source of their information to be guessed at. The Marquis d'Espard was so clumsy as to call upon me, regarding me as the first cause of his winning the day in that atrocious suit.'

'I will rescue you from Madame d'Espard,' said Clotilde.

'How?' cried Lucien.

'My mother shall ask the young d'Espards here; they are charming boys, and growing up now. The father and sons will sing your praises, and then we are sure never to see their mother again.'

'Oh, Clotilde, you are an angel! If I did not love you for yourself, I should love you for being so clever.'

'It is not cleverness,' said she, all her love beaming on her lips. 'Good-night. Do not come again for some few days. When you see me in church, at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, with a pink scarf, my father will be in a better temper.—You will find an answer stuck to the back of the chair you are sitting in; it will comfort you perhaps for not seeing me. Put the note you have brought under my handkerchief——'

This young person was evidently more than seven-and-twenty.

Lucien took a cab in the Rue de la Planche, got out of

it on the Boulevards, took another by the Madeleine, and desired the driver to have the gates opened and drive in at the house in the Rue Taitbout.

On going in at eleven o'clock, he found Esther in tears, but dressed as she was wont to dress to do him honour. She awaited her Lucien reclining on a sofa covered with white satin brocaded with yellow flowers, dressed in a bewitching wrapper of India muslin with cherry-coloured bows; without her stays, her hair simply twisted into a knot, her feet in little velvet slippers lined with cherry-coloured satin; all the candles were burning, the hookah was prepared. But she had not smoked her own, which stood beside her unlighted, emblematical of her loneliness. On hearing the doors open, she sprang up like a gazelle, and threw her arms round Lucien, wrapping him like a web caught by the wind and flung about a tree.

'Parted.—Is it true?'

'Oh, just for a few days,' replied Lucien.

Esther released him, and fell back on her divan like a dead thing.

In these circumstances, most women babble like parrots. Oh! how they love! At the end of five years they feel as if their first happiness were a thing of yesterday, they cannot give you up, they are magnificent in their indignation, despair, love, grief, dread, dejection, presentiments. In short, they are as sublime as a scene from Shakespeare. But make no mistake! These women do not love. When they are really all that these profess, when they love truly, they do as Esther did, as children do, as true love does; Esther did not say a word, she lay with her face buried in the pillows, shedding bitter tears.

Lucien, on his part, tried to lift her up, and spoke to her.

'But, my child, we are not to part. What, after four years of happiness, is this the way you take a short absence.—What on earth do I do to all these girls?' he

added to himself, remembering that Coralie had loved him thus.

'Ah, Monsieur, you are so handsome,' said Europe.

The senses have their own ideal. When added to this fascinating beauty we find the sweetness of nature, the poetry, that characterised Lucien, it is easy to conceive of the mad passion roused in such women, keenly alive as they are to external gifts, and artless in their admiration. Esther was sobbing quietly, and lay in an attitude expressive of the deepest distress.

'But, little goose,' said Lucien, 'did you not understand that my life is at stake?'

At these words, which he chose on purpose, Esther started up like a wild animal, her hair fell, tumbling about her excited face like wreaths of foliage. She looked steadily at Lucien.

'Your life?' she cried, throwing up her arms, and letting them drop with a gesture known only to a courtesan in peril. 'To be sure; that friend's note speaks of serious risk.'

She took a shabby scrap of paper out of her sash; then seeing Europe, she said, 'Leave us, my girl.'

When Europe had shut the door, she went on—'Here, this is what he writes,' and she handed to Lucien a note she had just received from Carlos, which Lucien read aloud—

'You must leave to-morrow at five in the morning; you will be taken to a keeper's lodge in the heart of the Forest of Saint-Germain, where you will have a room on the first floor. Do not quit that room till I give you leave; you will want for nothing. The keeper and his wife are to be trusted. Do not write to Lucien. Do not go to the window during daylight; but you may walk by night with the keeper if you wish for exercise. Keep the carriage blinds down on the way. Lucien's life is at stake.



'Lucien will go to-night to bid you good-bye; burn this in his presence.'

Lucien burnt the note at once in the flame of a candle.

'Listen, my own Lucien,' said Esther, after hearing him read this letter as a criminal hears the sentence of death; 'I will not tell you that I love you; it would be idiotic. For nearly five years it has been as natural to me to love you as to breathe and live. From the first day when my happiness began under the protection of that inscrutable being, who placed me here as you place some little curious beast in a cage, I have known that you must marry. Marriage is a necessary factor in your career, and God preserve me from hindering the development of your fortunes.

'That marriage will be my death. But I will not worry you; I will not do as the common girls do who kill themselves by means of a brazier of charcoal; I had enough of that once; twice raises your gorge, as Mariette says. No, I will go a long way off, out of France. Asie knows the secrets of her country; she will help me to die quietly. A prick—whiff, it is all over!

'I ask but one thing, my dearest, and that is that you will not deceive me. I have had my share of living. Since the day I first saw you, in 1824, till this day, I have known more happiness than can be put into the lives of ten fortunate wives. So take me for what I am—a woman as strong as I am weak. Say "I am going to be married." I will ask no more of you than a fond farewell, and you shall never hear of me again.'

There was a moment's silence after this explanation, as sincere as her action and tone were guileless.

'Is it that you are going to be married?' she repeated, looking into Lucien's blue eyes with one of her fascinating glances, as brilliant as a steel blade.

'We have been toiling at my marriage for eighteen months past, and it is not yet settled,' replied Lucien. 'I do not know when it can be settled; but it is not in question now, dear child!—It is the Abbé, I, you.—We are in real peril. Nucingen saw you——'

'Yes, in the wood at Vincennes,' said she. 'Did he recognise me?'

'No,' said Lucien. 'But he has fallen so desperately in love with you, that he would sacrifice his coffers. After dinner, when he was describing how he had met you, I was so foolish as to smile involuntarily, and most imprudently, for I live in the world like a savage surrounded by the traps of a hostile tribe. Carlos, who spares me the pains of thinking, regards the position as dangerous, and he has undertaken to pay Nucingen out if the Baron takes it into his head to spy on us; and he is quite capable of it; he spoke to me of the incapacity of the police. You have lighted a flame in an old chimney choked with soot.'

'And what does your Spaniard propose to do?' asked Esther very softly.

'I do not know in the least,' said Lucien; 'he told me I might sleep soundly and leave it to him;'—but he dared not look at Esther.

'If that is the case, I will obey him with the dog-like submission I profess,' said Esther, putting her hand through Lucien's arm and leading him into her bedroom, saying, 'At any rate, I hope you dined well, my Lulu, at that detestable Baron's?'

'Asie's cooking prevents my ever thinking a dinner good, however famous the *chef* may be, where I happen to dine. However, Carême did the dinner to-night, as he does every Sunday.'

Lucien involuntarily compared Esther with Clotilde. The mistress was so beautiful, so unfailingly charming, that she had as yet kept at arm's length the monster who devours the most perennial loves—Satiety.

'What a pity,' thought he, 'to find one's wife in two volumes. In one—poetry, delight, love, devotion, beauty, sweetness——'

Esther was fussing about, as women do, before going to bed; she came and went and fluttered round, singing all the time; you might have thought her a humming-bird.

'In the other—a noble name, family, honours, rank, knowledge of the world!—And no earthly means of combining them!' cried Lucien to himself.

Next morning, at seven, when the poet awoke in the pretty pink-and-white room, he found himself alone. He rang, and Europe hurried in.

'What are Monsieur's orders?'

'Esther?'

'Madame went off this morning at a quarter to five. By Monsieur l'Abbé's order, I admitted a new face—carriage paid.'

'A woman?'

'No, sir, an English woman—one of those people who do their day's work by night, and we are ordered to treat her as if she were Madame. What can you have to say to such hack?—Poor Madame, how she cried when she got into the carriage. "Well, it has to be done!" cried she. "I left that poor dear boy asleep," said she, wiping away her tears; "Europe, if he had looked at me or spoken my name, I should have stayed—I could but have died with him."—I tell you, sir, I am so fond of Madame, that I did not show her the person who has taken her place; some waiting-maids would have broken her heart by doing so.'

'And is the stranger there?'

'Well, sir, she came in the chaise that took away Madame, and I hid her in my room in obedience to my instructions——'

'Is she nice-looking?'

'So far as such a second-hand article can be. But she

will find her part easy enough if you play yours, sir,' said Europe, going to fetch the false Esther.

The night before, ere going to bed, the all-powerful banker had given his orders to his valet, who, at seven in the morning, brought in to him the notorious Louchard, the most famous of the commercial police, whom he left in a little sitting-room; there the Baron joined him, in a dressing-gown and slippers.

'You haf mate a fool of me!' he said, in reply to this official's greeting.

'I could not help myself, Monsieur le Baron. I do not want to lose my place, and I had the honour of explaining to you that I could not meddle in a matter that had nothing to do with my functions. What did I promise you? To put you into communication with one of our agents, who, as it seemed to me, would be best able to serve you. But you know, Monsieur le Baron, the sharp lines that divide men of different trades: if you build a house, you do not set a carpenter to do smith's work. Well, there are two branches of the police—the political police and the judicial police. The political police never interfere with the other branch, and *vice-versa*. If you apply to the chief of the political police, he must get permission from the Minister to take up your business, and you would not dare to explain it to the head of the police throughout the kingdom. A police-agent who should act on his own account would lose his place.

'Well, the ordinary police are quite as cautious as the political police. So no one, whether in the Home Office or at the Préfecture of Police, ever moves excepting in the interests of the State or for the ends of Justice.

'If there is a plot or a crime to be followed up, then, indeed, the heads of the corps are at your service; but you must understand, Monsieur le Baron, that they have other fish to fry than looking after the fifty thousand

love affairs in Paris. As to me and my men, our only business is to arrest debtors; and as soon as anything else is to be done, we run enormous risks if we interfere with the peace and quiet of any man or woman. I sent you one of my men, but I told you I could not answer for him; you instructed him to find a particular woman in Paris; Contenson bled you of a thousand-franc note, and did not even move. You might as well look for a needle in the river as for a woman in Paris, who is supposed to haunt Vincennes, and of whom the description answers to every pretty woman in the capital.'

'And could not Contenson haf tolt me de truf, instead of making me pleed out one tousand franc?'

'Listen to me, Monsieur le Baron,' said Louchard. 'Will you give me a thousand crowns? I will give you—sell you—a piece of advice?'

'Is it vort one tousand crown—your atvice?' asked Nucingen.

'I am not to be caught, Monsieur le Baron,' answered Louchard. 'You are in love, you want to discover the object of your passion; you are getting as yellow as a lettuce without water. Two physicians came to see you yesterday, your man tells me, who think your life is in danger: now, I alone can put you in the hands of a clever fellow.—But the deuce is in it! If your life is not worth a thousand crowns——'

'Tell me de name of dat clefer fellow, and depent on my generosity——'

Louchard took up his hat, bowed, and left the room.

'Wat ein teufel!' cried Nucingen. 'Come back—look here——'

'Take notice,' said Louchard, before taking the money, 'I am only selling a piece of information, pure and simple. I can give you the name and address of the only man who is able to be of use to you—but he is a master——'

'Get out mit you,' cried Nucingen. 'Dere is not no

name dat is vort one tousant crown but dat von Varschild—and dat only ven it is sign at the bottom of a bank-bill.—I shall gif you one tousant franc.'

Louchard, a little weasel, who had never been able to purchase an office as lawyer, notary, clerk, or attorney, leered at the Baron in a significant fashion.

'To you—a thousand crowns, or let it alone. You will get them back in a few seconds on the Bourse,' said he.

'I vill gif you one tousant franc,' repeated the Baron.

'You would cheapen a gold mine!' said Louchard, bowing and leaving.

'I shall get dat address for five hundert franc!' cried the Baron, who desired his servant to send his secretary to him.

Turcaret is no more. In these days the smallest banker, like the greatest, exercises his acumen in the smallest transactions; he bargains over art, beneficence, and love; he would bargain with the Pope for a dispensation. Thus, as he listened to Louchard, Nucingen had hastily concluded that Contenson, Louchard's right-hand man, must certainly know the address of that master spy. Contenson would tell him for five hundred francs what Louchard wanted to see a thousand crowns for. The rapid calculation plainly proves that if the man's heart was in possession of love, his head was still that of the lynx stockjobber.

'Go your own self, Mensieur,' said the Baron to his secretary, 'to Contenson, dat spy of Louchart's, de bailiff man—but go in one capriolette, very qvick, and pring him here qvick to me. I shall vait.—Go out trough de garten.—Here is dat key, for no man shall see dat man in here. You shall take him into dat little garten-house. Try to do dat little business very clefer.'

Visitors called to see Nucingen on business; but he waited for Contenson, he was dreaming of Esther, telling himself that before long he would see again the woman who had aroused in him such unhoped-for emotions, and

he sent everybody away with vague replies and double-edged promises. Contenson was to him the most important person in Paris, and he looked out into the garden every minute. Finally, after giving orders that no one else was to be admitted, he had his breakfast served in the summer-house at one corner of the garden. In the banker's office the conduct and hesitancy of the most knowing, the most clearsighted, the shrewdest of Paris financiers seemed inexplicable.

'What ails the chief?' said a stockbroker to one of the head-clerks.

'No one knows; they are anxious about his health, it would seem. Yesterday, Madame la Baronne got Desplein and Bianchon to meet.'

One day, when Sir Isaac Newton was engaged in physicking one of his dogs, named 'Beauty' (who, as is well known, destroyed a vast mass of work, and whom he reproved only in these words, 'Ah! Beauty, you little know the mischief you have done!'), some strangers called to see him; but they at once retired, respecting the great man's occupation. In every more or less lofty life, there is a little dog 'Beauty.' When the Maréchal de Richelieu came to pay his respects to Louis XV. after taking Mahon, one of the greatest feats of arms of the eighteenth century, the King said to him, 'Have you heard the great news? Poor Lansmatt is dead.'—Lansmatt was a gatekeeper in the secret of the King's intrigues.

The bankers of Paris never knew how much they owed to Contenson. That spy was the cause of Nucingen's allowing an immense loan to be issued in which his share was allotted to him, and which he gave over to them. The stockjobber could aim at a fortune any day with the artillery of speculation, but the man was a slave to the hope of happiness.

The great banker drank some tea, and was nibbling at a slice of bread and butter, as a man does whose teeth

have for long not been sharpened by appetite, when he heard a carriage stop at the little garden gate. In a few minutes his secretary brought in Contenson, whom he had run to earth in a café not far from Sainte-Pélagie, where the man was breakfasting on the strength of a bribe given to him by an imprisoned debtor for certain allowances that must be paid for.

Contenson, you must know, was a whole poem—a Paris poem. Merely to see him would have been enough to tell you that Beaumarchais' *Figaro*, Molière's *Mascarille*, Marivaux's *Frontin*, and Dancourt's *Lafleur*—those great representatives of audacious swindling, of cunning driven to bay, of stratagem rising again from the ends of its broken wires—were all quite second-rate by comparison with this giant of cleverness and meanness. When in Paris you find a real type, he is no longer a man, he is a spectacle; no longer a factor in life, but a whole life, many lives.

Bake a plaster cast four times in a furnace, and you get a sort of bastard imitation of Florentine bronze. Well, the thunderbolts of numberless disasters, the pressure of terrible necessities, had bronzed Contenson's head, as though sweating in an oven had three times over stained his skin. Closely-set wrinkles that could no longer be relaxed made eternal furrows, whiter in their cracks. The yellow face was all wrinkles. The bald skull, resembling Voltaire's, was as parched as a death's-head, and but for a few hairs at the back it would have seemed doubtful whether it was that of a living man. Under a rigid brow, a pair of Chinese eyes, like those of an image under a glass shade in a tea-shop—artificial eyes, which sham life but never vary—moved but expressed nothing. The nose, as flat as that of a skull, sniffed at fate; and the mouth, as thin-lipped as a miser's, was always open, but as expressionless as the grin of a letter-box.

Contenson, as apathetic as a savage, with sunburnt

hands, affected that Diogenes-like indifference which can never bend to any formality of respect.

And what a commentary on his life was written on his dress for any one who can decipher a dress! Above all, what trousers! made, by long wear, as black and shiny as the camlet of which lawyers' gowns are made! A waistcoat, bought in an old clothes shop in the Temple, with a deep embroidered collar! A rusty black coat!—and everything well brushed, clean after a fashion, and graced by a watch and an imitation gold chain. Contenson allowed a triangle of shirt to show, with pleats in which glittered a sham diamond pin; his black velvet stock set stiff like a gorget, over which lay rolls of flesh as red as that of a Caribbee. His silk hat was as glossy as satin, but the lining would have yielded grease enough for two street lamps if some grocer had bought it to boil down.

But to enumerate these accessories is nothing; if only I could give an idea of the air of immense importance that Contenson contrived to impart to them! There was something indescribably knowing in the collar of his coat, and the fresh blacking on a pair of boots with gaping soles, to which no language can do justice. However, to give some notion of this medley of effect, it may be added that any man of intelligence would have felt, only on seeing Contenson, that if instead of being a spy he had been a thief, all these odds and ends, instead of raising a smile, would have made one shudder with horror. Judging only from his dress, the observer would have said to himself, 'That is a scoundrel; he gambles, he drinks, he is full of vices; but he does not get drunk, he does not cheat, he is neither a thief nor a murderer.' And Contenson remained inscrutable till the word spy suggested itself.

This man had followed as many unrecognised trades as there are recognised ones. The sly smile on his lips, the twinkle of his green eyes, the queer twitch of his

snub nose, showed that he was not deficient in humour. He had a face of sheet-tin, and his soul must probably be like his face. Every movement of his countenance was a grimace wrung from him by politeness rather than any expression of an inmost impulse. He would have been alarming if he had not seemed so droll.

Contenson, one of the most curious products of the scum that rises to the top of the seething Paris cauldron, where everything ferments, prided himself on being, above all things, a philosopher. He would say, without any bitter feeling—

'I have grand talents, but of what use are they? I might as well have been an idiot.'

And he blamed himself instead of accusing mankind. Find, if you can, many spies who have not more venom about them than Contenson had.

'Circumstances are against me,' he would say to his chiefs. 'We might be fine crystal; we are but grains of sand, that is all.'

His indifference to dress had some sense. He cared no more about his everyday clothes than an actor does; he excelled in disguising himself, in 'make-up'; he could have given Frédéric Lemaître a lesson, for he could be a dandy when necessary. Formerly, in his younger days, he must have mingled in the out-at-elbows society of people living on a humble scale. He expressed excessive disgust for the criminal police corps; for, under the Empire, he had belonged to Fouché's police, and looked upon him as a great man. Since the suppression of this Government department, he had devoted his energies to the tracking of commercial defaulters; but his well-known talents and acumen made him a valuable auxiliary, and the unrecognised chiefs of the political police had kept his name on their lists. Contenson, like his fellows, was only a super in the dramas of which the leading parts were played by his chief when a political investigation was in the wind.

'Go 'vay,' said Nucingen, dismissing his secretary with a wave of the hand.

'Why should this man live in a mansion and I in a lodging?' wondered Contenson to himself. 'He has dodged his creditors three times; he has robbed them; I never stole a farthing; I am a cleverer fellow than he is——'

'Contenson, mein freund,' said the Baron, 'you haf vat you call pleed me of one tousand-franc note.'

'My girl owed God and the devil——'

'Vat, you haf a girl, a mistress!' cried Nucingen, looking at Contenson with admiration not unmixed with envy.

'I am but sixty-six,' replied Contenson, as a man whom vice has kept young as a bad example.

'And vat do she do?'

'She helps me,' said Contenson. 'When a man is a thief, and an honest woman loves him, either she becomes a thief or he becomes an honest man. I have always been a spy.'

'And you vant money—alvays?' asked Nucingen.

'Always,' said Contenson, with a smile. 'It is part of my business to want money, as it is yours to make it; we shall easily come to an understanding. You find me a little, and I will undertake to spend it. You shall be the well, and I the bucket.'

'Vould you like to haf one note for fife hundert franc?'

'What a question! But what a fool I am!—You do not offer it out of a disinterested desire to repair the slights of Fortune?'

'Not at all. I gif it besides the one tousand-franc note vat you pleed me off. Dat makes fifteen hundert franc vat I gif you.'

'Very good, you give me the thousand francs I have had, and you will add five hundred francs.

'Yust so,' said Nucingen, nodding.

'But that still leaves only five hundred francs,' said Contenson imperturbably.

'Dat I gif,' added the Baron.

'That I take. Very good; and what, Monsieur le Baron, do you want for it?'

'I haf been told dat dere vas in Paris one man vat could find the voman vat I lof, and dat you know his address. . . . A real master to spy.'

'Very true.'

'Vell den, gif me dat address, and I gif you fife hundert franc.'

'Where are they?' said Contenson.

'Here dey are,' said the Baron, drawing a note out of his pocket.

'All right, hand them over,' said Contenson, holding out his hand.

'Noting for noting! Let us see de man, and you get de money; you might sell to me many address at dat price.'

Contenson began to laugh.

'To be sure, you have a right to think that of me,' said he, with an air of blaming himself. 'The more rascally our business is, the more honesty is necessary. But look here, Monsieur le Baron, make it six hundred, and I will give you a bit of advice.'

'Gif it, and trust to my generosity.'

'I will risk it,' Contenson said, 'but it is playing high. In such matters, you see, we have to work underground. You say, "Quick march!"—You are rich; you think that money can do everything. Well, money is something, no doubt. Still, money can only buy men, as the two or three best heads in our force so often say. And there are many things you would never think of which money cannot buy.—You cannot buy good luck. So good police work is not done in this style. Will you show yourself in a carriage with me? We should be seen. Chance is just as often for us as against us.'

'Really-truly?' said the Baron.

'Why, of course, sir. A horse-shoe picked up in the street led the chief of the police to the discovery of the infernal machine. Well, if we were to go to-night in a hackney coach to Monsieur de Saint-Germain, he would not like to see you walk in any more than you would like to be seen going there.'

'Dat is true,' said the Baron.

'Ah, he is the greatest of the great! such another as the famous Corentin, Fouché's right arm, who was, some say, his natural son, born while he was still a priest; but that is nonsense. Fouché knew how to be a priest as he knew how to be a Minister. Well, you will not get this man to do anything for you, you see, for less than ten thousand-franc notes—think of that.—But he will do the job, and do it well. Neither seen nor heard, as they say. I ought to give Monsieur de Saint-Germain notice, and he will fix a time for your meeting in some place where no one can see or hear, for it is a dangerous game to play policeman for private interests. Still, what is to be said? He is a good fellow, the king of good fellows, and a man who has undergone much persecution, and for having saved his country too!—like me, like all who helped to save it.'

'Vell den, write and name de happy day,' said the Baron, smiling at his humble jest.

'And Monsieur le Baron will allow me to drink his health?' said Contenson, with a manner at once cringing and threatening.

'Shean,' cried the Baron to the gardener, 'go and tell Chorge to sent me one twenty francs, and pring dem to me——'

'Still, Monsieur le Baron, if you have no more information than you have just given me, I doubt whether the great man can be of any use to you.'

'I know off oders!' replied the Baron with a cunning look.

'I have the honour to bid you good-morning, Monsieur le Baron,' said Contenson, taking the twenty-franc piece. 'I shall have the honour of calling again to tell Georges where you are to go this evening, for we never write anything in such cases when they are well managed.'

'It is funny how sharp dese rascals are!' said the Baron to himself; 'it is de same mit de police as it is in buss'niss.'

When he left the Baron, Contenson went quietly from the Rue Saint-Lazare to the Rue Saint-Honoré, as far as the Café David. He looked in through the windows, and saw an old man who was known there by the name of le Père Canquoëlle.

The Café David, at the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie and the Rue Saint-Honoré, enjoyed a certain celebrity during the first thirty years of the century, though its fame was limited to the quarter known as that of the Bourdonnais. Here certain old retired merchants, and large shopkeepers still in trade, were wont to meet—the Camusots, the Lebas, the Pilleraults, the Popinots, and a few house-owners like little old Molineux. Now and again old Guillaume might be seen there, coming from the Rue du Colombier. Politics were discussed in a quiet way, but cautiously, for the opinions of the Café David were liberal. The gossip of the neighbourhood was repeated, men so urgently feel the need of laughing at each other!

This café, like all cafés for that matter, had its eccentric character in the person of the said Père Canquoëlle, who had been regular in his attendance there since 1811, and who seemed to be so completely in harmony with the good folks who assembled there, that they all talked politics in his presence without reserve. Sometimes this old fellow, whose guilelessness was the subject of much laughter to the customers, would disappear for a month or two; but his absence never

surprised anybody, and was always attributed to his infirmities or his great age, for he looked more than sixty in 1811.

'What has become of old Canquoëlle?' one or another would ask of the manageress at the desk.

'I quite expect that one fine day we shall read in the advertisement-sheet that he is dead,' she would reply.

Old Canquoëlle bore a perpetual certificate of his native province in his accent. He spoke of *une estatue* (a statue), *le peuble* (the people), and said *ture* for *turc*. His name was that of a tiny estate called les Canquoëlles, a word meaning cockchafer in some districts, situated in the department of Vaucluse, whence he had come. At last every one had fallen into the habit of calling him Canquoëlle, instead of des Canquoëlles, and the old man took no offence, for in his opinion the nobility had perished in 1793; and besides, the land of des Canquoëlles did not belong to him; he was a younger son's younger son.

Nowadays old Canquoëlle's costume would look strange, but between 1811 and 1820 it astonished no one. The old man wore shoes with cut-steel buckles, silk stockings with stripes round the leg, alternately blue and white, corded silk knee-breeches with oval buckles cut to match those on his shoes. A white embroidered waistcoat, an old coat of olive-brown with metal buttons, and a shirt with a flat-pleated frill completed his costume. In the middle of the shirt-frill twinkled a small gold locket, in which might be seen, under glass, a little temple worked in hair, one of those pathetic trifles which give men confidence, just as a scarecrow frightens sparrows. Most men, like other animals, are frightened or reassured by trifles. Old Canquoëlle's breeches were kept in place by a buckle which, in the fashion of the last century, tightened them across the stomach; from the belt hung on each side a short steel chain, composed of several finer chains, and ending

in a bunch of seals. His white neckcloth was fastened behind by a small gold buckle. Finally, on his snowy and powdered hair, he still, in 1816, wore the municipal cocked hat which Monsieur Try, the President of the Law Courts, also used to wear. But Père Canquoëlle had recently substituted for this hat, so dear to old men, the undignified top-hat, which no one dares to rebel against. The good man thought he owed so much as this to the spirit of the age. A small pigtail tied with a ribbon had traced a semicircle on the back of his coat, the greasy mark being hidden by powder.

If you looked no further than the most conspicuous feature of his face, a nose covered with excrescences red and swollen enough to figure in a dish of truffles, you might have inferred that the worthy man had an easy temper, foolish and easy-going, that of a perfect gaby; and you would have been deceived, like all at the Café David, where no one had ever remarked the studious brow, the sardonic mouth, and the cold eyes of this old man, petted by his vices, and as calm as Vitellius, whose imperial and portly stomach reappeared in him palingenetically, so to speak.

In 1816 a young commercial traveller named Gaudissart, who frequented the Café David, sat drinking from eleven o'clock till midnight with a half-pay officer. He was so rash as to discuss a conspiracy against the Bourbons, a rather serious plot then on the point of execution. There was no one to be seen in the café but Père Canquoëlle, who seemed to be asleep, two waiters who were dozing, and the accountant at the desk. Within four-and-twenty hours Gaudissart was arrested, the plot was discovered. Two men perished on the scaffold. Neither Gaudissart nor any one else ever suspected that worthy old Canquoëlle of having peached. The waiters were dismissed; for a year they were all on their guard and afraid of the police—as Père Canquoëlle was too; indeed, he talked of retiring

from the Café David, such horror had he of the police.

Contenson went into the café, asked for a glass of brandy, and did not look at Canquoëlle, who sat reading the papers; but when he had gulped down the brandy, he took out the Baron's gold piece, and called the waiter by rapping three short taps on the table. The lady at the desk and the waiter examined the coin with a minute care that was not flattering to Contenson; but their suspicions were justified by the astonishment produced on all the regular customers by Contenson's appearance.

'Was that gold got by theft or by murder?'

This was the idea that rose to some clear and shrewd minds as they looked at Contenson over their spectacles, while affecting to read the news. Contenson, who saw everything, and never was surprised at anything, scornfully wiped his lips with a bandana, in which there were but three darns, took his change, slipped all the coppers into his side pocket, of which the lining, once white, was now as black as the cloth of the trousers, and did not leave one for the waiter.

'What a gallows-bird!' said Père Canquoëlle to his neighbour Monsieur Pillerault.

'Pshaw!' said Monsieur Camusot to all the company, for he alone had expressed no astonishment, 'it is Contenson, Louchard's right-hand man, the police agent we employ in business. The rascals want to nab some one who is hanging about perhaps.'

It would seem necessary to explain here the terrible and profoundly cunning man who was hidden under the guise of Père Canquoëlle, as Vautrin was hidden under that of the Abbé Carlos.

Born at Canquoëlles, the only possession of his family, which was highly respectable, this Southerner's name was Peyrade. He belonged, in fact, to the younger branch of the Peyrade family, an old but impoverished house of Franche Comté, still owning the little estate of la Peyrade.

The seventh child of his father, he had come on foot to Paris in 1772 at the age of seventeen, with two crowns of six francs in his pocket, prompted by the vices of an ardent spirit and the coarse desire to 'get on,' which brings so many men to Paris from the south as soon as they understand that their father's property can never supply them with means to gratify their passions. It is enough to say of Peyrade's youth that in 1782 he was in the confidence of chiefs of the police and the hero of the department, highly esteemed by MM. Lenoir and d'Albert, the last Lieutenant-Generals of Police.

The Revolution had no police; it needed none. Espionage, though common enough, was called public spirit.

The Directorate, a rather more regular government than that of the Committee of Public Safety, was obliged to reorganise the Police, and the first Consul completed the work by instituting a Prefect of Police and a department of police supervision.

Peyrade, a man knowing the traditions, collected the force with the assistance of a man named Corentin, a far cleverer man than Peyrade, though younger; but he was a genius only in the subterranean ways of police inquiries. In 1808 the great services Peyrade was able to achieve were rewarded by an appointment to the eminent position of Chief Commissioner of Police at Antwerp. In Napoleon's mind this sort of Police Governorship was equivalent to a Minister's post, with the duty of superintending Holland. At the end of the campaign of 1809, Peyrade was removed from Antwerp by an order in Council from the Emperor, carried in a chaise to Paris between two gendarmes, and imprisoned in la Force. Two months later he was let out on bail furnished by his friend Corentin, after having been subjected to three examinations, each lasting six hours, in the office of the head of the Police.

Did Peyrade owe his overthrow to the miraculous

energy he displayed in aiding Fouché in the defence of the French coast when threatened by what was known at the time as the Walcheren expedition, when the Duke of Otranto manifested such abilities as alarmed the Emperor? Fouché thought it probable even then; and now, when everybody knows what went on in the Cabinet Council called together by Cambacérès, it is absolutely certain. The Ministers, thunderstruck by the news of England's attempt, a retaliation on Napoleon for the Boulogne expedition, and taken by surprise when the Master was entrenched in the island of Lobau, where all Europe believed him to be lost, had not an idea which way to turn. The general opinion was in favour of sending post haste to the Emperor; Fouché alone was bold enough to sketch a plan of campaign, which, in fact, he carried into execution.

'Do as you please,' said Cambacérès; 'but I, who prefer to keep my head on my shoulders, shall send a report to the Emperor.'

It is well known that the Emperor on his return found an absurd pretext, at a full meeting of the Council of State, for discarding his Minister and punishing him for having saved France without the Sovereign's help. From that time forth, Napoleon had doubled the hostility of Prince de Talleyrand and the Duke of Otranto, the only two great politicians formed by the Revolution, who might perhaps have been able to save Napoleon in 1813.

To get rid of Peyrade, he was simply accused of connivance in favouring smuggling and sharing certain profits with the great merchants. Such an indignity was hard on a man who had earned the Marshal's baton of the Police Department by the great services he had done. This man, who had grown old in active business, knew all the secrets of every Government since 1775, when he had entered the service. The Emperor, who believed himself powerful enough to create men for

his own uses, paid no heed to the representations subsequently laid before him in favour of a man who was reckoned as one of the most trustworthy, most capable, and most acute of the unknown genii whose task it is to watch over the safety of a State. He thought he could put Contenson in Peyrade's place ; but Contenson was at that time employed by Corentin for his own benefit.

Peyrade felt the blow all the more keenly because, being greedy and a libertine, he had found himself, with regard to women, in the position of a pastry-cook who loves sweetmeats. His habits of vice had become to him a second nature ; he could not live without a good dinner, without gambling, in short, without the life of an unpretentious fine gentleman, in which men of powerful faculties so generally indulge when they have allowed excessive dissipation to become a necessity. Hitherto he had lived in style without ever being expected to entertain ; and living well, for no one ever looked for a return from him, or from his friend Corentin. He was cynically witty, and he liked his profession ; he was a philosopher. And besides, a spy, whatever grade he may hold in the machinery of the police, can no more return to a profession regarded as honourable or liberal, than a prisoner from the hulks can. Once branded, once matriculated, spies and convicts, like deacons, have assumed an indelible character. There are beings on whom social conditions impose an inevitable fate.

Peyrade, for his further woe, was very fond of a pretty little girl whom he knew to be his own child by a celebrated actress to whom he had done a signal service, and who, for three months, had been grateful to him. Peyrade, who had sent for his child from Antwerp, now found himself without employment in Paris and with no means beyond a pension of twelve hundred francs a year allowed him by the Police Department as Lenoir's old disciple. He took lodgings in the Rue des Moineaux

on the fourth floor, five little rooms, at a rent of two hundred and fifty francs.

If any man should be aware of the uses and sweets of friendship, is it not the moral leper known to the world as a spy, to the mob as a *mouchard*, to the department as an 'agent'? Peyrade and Corentin were such friends as Orestes and Pylades. Peyrade had trained Corentin as Vien trained David; but the pupil soon surpassed his master. They had carried out more than one undertaking together. Peyrade, happy at having discerned Corentin's superior abilities, had started him in his career by preparing a success for him. He obliged his disciple to make use of a mistress who had scorned him as a bait to catch a man (see *The Chouans*). And Corentin at that time was hardly five-and-twenty.

Corentin, who had been retained as one of the generals of whom the Minister of Police is the High Constable, still held under the Duc de Rovigo the high position he had filled under the Duke of Otranto. Now at that time the general police and the criminal police were managed on similar principles. When any important business was on hand, an account was opened, as it were, for the three, four, five, really capable agents. The Minister, on being warned of some plot, by whatever means, would say to one of his colonels of the police force—

'How much will you want to achieve this or that result?'

Corentin or Contenson would go into the matter and reply—

'Twenty, thirty, or forty thousand francs.'

Then, as soon as the order was given to go ahead, all the means and the men were left to the judgment of Corentin or the agent selected. And the criminal police used to act in the same way to discover crimes with the famous Vidocq.

Both branches of the police chose their men chiefly

from among the ranks of well-known agents, who have matriculated in the business, and are, as it were, as soldiers of the secret army, so indispensable to a government, in spite of the public orations of philanthropists or narrow-minded moralists. But the absolute confidence placed in two men of the temper of Peyrade and Corentin conveyed to them the right of employing perfect strangers, under the risk, moreover, of being responsible to the Minister in all serious cases. Peyrade's experience and acumen were too valuable to Corentin, who, after the storm of 1820 had blown over, employed his old friend, constantly consulted him, and contributed largely to his maintenance. Corentin managed to put about a thousand francs a month into Peyrade's hands.

Peyrade, on his part, did Corentin good service. In 1816 Corentin, on the strength of the discovery of the conspiracy in which the Bonapartist Gaudissart was implicated, tried to get Peyrade reinstated in his place in the police office; but some unknown influence was working against Peyrade. This was the reason why—

In their anxiety to make themselves necessary, Peyrade, Corentin, and Contenson, at the Duke of Otranto's instigation, had organised for the benefit of Louis XVIII. a sort of opposition police in which very capable agents were employed. Louis XVIII. died possessed of secrets which will remain secrets from the best informed historians. The struggle between the general police of the kingdom, and the King's opposition police, led to many horrible disasters, of which a certain number of executions sealed the secrets. This is neither the place nor the occasion for entering into details on this subject, for these 'Scenes of Paris Life' are not 'Scenes of Political Life.' Enough has been said to show what were the means of living of the man who at the Café David was known as good old Canquoëlle, and by what threads he was tied to the terrible and mysterious powers of the police.

Between 1817 and 1822, Corentin, Contenson, Peyrade, and their myrmidons, were often required to keep watch over the Minister of Police himself. This perhaps explains why the Minister declined to employ Peyrade and Contenson, on whom Corentin contrived to cast the Minister's suspicions, in order to be able to make use of his friend when his reinstatement was evidently out of the question. The Ministry put their faith in Corentin; they enjoined him to keep an eye on Peyrade, which amused Louis XVIII. Corentin and Peyrade were then masters of the position. Contenson, long attached to Peyrade, was still at his service. He had joined the force of the commercial police (the Gardes du Commerce) by his friend's orders. And, in fact, as a result of the sort of zeal that is inspired by a profession we love, these two chiefs liked to place their best men in those posts where information was most likely to flow in.

And, indeed, Contenson's vices and dissipated habits, which had dragged him lower than his two friends, consumed so much money, that he needed a great deal of business.

Contenson, without committing any indiscretion, had told Louchard that he knew the only man who was capable of doing what the Baron de Nucingen required. Peyrade was, in fact, the only police-agent who could act on behalf of a private individual with impunity. At the death of Louis XVIII., Peyrade had not only ceased to be of consequence, but had lost the profits of his position as spy-in-ordinary to His Majesty. Believing himself to be indispensable, he had lived fast. Women, high feeding, and the club, the *Cercle des Etrangers*, had prevented this man from saving, and, like all men cut out for debauchery, he enjoyed an iron constitution. But between 1826 and 1829, when he was nearly seventy-four years of age, he had stuck halfway, to use his own expression. Year by year he saw his comforts dwindling. He followed the police department to its grave, and saw

with regret that Charles x.'s government was departing from its good old traditions. Every session saw the estimates pared down which were necessary to keep up the police, out of hatred for that method of government and a firm determination to reform that institution.

'It is as if they thought they could cook in white gloves,' said Peyrade to Corentin.

In 1822 this couple foresaw 1830. They knew how bitterly Louis xviii. hated his successor, which accounts for his recklessness with regard to the younger branch, and without which his reign would be an unanswerable riddle.

As Peyrade grew older, his love for his natural daughter had increased. For her sake he had adopted his citizen guise, for he intended that his Lydie should marry respectably. So for the last three years he had been especially anxious to find a corner, either at the Préfecture of Police, or in the general Police Office—some ostensible and recognised post. He had ended by inventing a place, of which the necessity, as he told Corentin, would sooner or later be felt. He was anxious to create an inquiry office at the Préfecture of Police, to be intermediate between the Paris police in the strictest sense, the criminal police, and the superior general police, so as to enable the supreme board to profit by the various scattered forces. No one but Peyrade, at his age, and after fifty-five years of confidential work, could be the connecting link between the three branches of the police, or the keeper of the records to whom political and judicial authority alike could apply for the elucidation of certain cases. By this means Peyrade hoped, with Corentin's assistance, to find a husband and scrape together a portion for his little Lydie. Corentin had already mentioned the matter to the Director-General of the police forces of the realm, without naming Peyrade; and the Director-General, a man from the south, thought

it necessary that the suggestion should come from the chief of the city police.

At the moment when Contenson struck three raps on the table with the gold piece, a signal conveying, 'I want to speak to you,' the senior was reflecting on this problem: 'By whom, and under what pressure can the Préfet of Police be made to move?'—And he looked like a noodle studying his *Courrier Français*.

'Poor Fouché!' thought he to himself, as he made his way along the Rue Saint-Honoré, 'that great man is dead! our go-betweens with Louis XVIII. are out of favour. And besides, as Corentin said only yesterday, nobody believes in the activity or the intelligence of a man of seventy. Oh, why did I get into a habit of dining at Véry's, of drinking choice wines, of singing *La Mère Godichon*, of gambling when I am in funds? To get a place and keep it, as Corentin says, it is not enough to be clever, you must have the gift of management. Poor dear M. Lenoir was right when he wrote to me in the matter of the Queen's necklace, "You will never do any good," when he heard that I did not stay under that slut Oliva's bed.'

If the venerable Père Canquoelle—he was called so in the house—lived on in the Rue des Moineaux, on a fourth floor, you may depend on it he had found some peculiarity in the arrangement of the premises which favoured the practice of his terrible profession.

The house, standing at the corner of the Rue Saint-Roch, had no neighbours on one side; and as the staircase up the middle divided it into two, there were on each floor two perfectly isolated rooms. These two rooms looked out on the Rue Saint-Roch. There were garret rooms above the fourth floor, one of them a kitchen, and the other a bedroom for Père Canquoëlle's only servant, a Fleming named Katt, formerly Lydie's wet-nurse. Old Canquoëlle had taken one of the outside rooms for his bedroom, and the other for his study.

The study ended at the party-wall, a very thick one. The window opening on the Rue des Moineaux looked on a blank wall at the opposite corner. As this study was divided from the stairs by the whole width of Peyrade's bedroom, the friends feared no eye, no ear, as they talked business in this study made on purpose for his detestable trade.

Peyrade, as a further precaution, had furnished Katt's room with a thick straw bed, a felt carpet, and a very heavy rug, under the pretext of making his child's nurse comfortable. He had also stopped up the chimney, warming his room by a stove, with a pipe through the wall to the Rue Saint-Roch. Finally, he laid several rugs on his floor to prevent the slightest sound being heard by the neighbours beneath. An expert himself in the tricks of spies, he sounded the outer wall, the ceiling, and the floor once a week, examining them as if he were in search of noxious insects. It was the security of this room from all witnesses or listeners that had made Corentin select it as his council-chamber when he did not hold a meeting in his own room.

Where Corentin lived was known to no one but the Chief of the Superior Police and to Peyrade; he received there such personages as the Ministry or the King selected to conduct very serious cases; but no agent or subordinate ever went there, and he plotted everything connected with their business at Peyrade's. In this unpretentious room schemes were matured, and resolutions passed, which would have furnished strange records and curious dramas if only walls could talk. Between 1816 and 1826 the highest interests were discussed there. There first germinated the events which grew to weigh on France. There Peyrade and Corentin, with all the foresight, and more than all the information of Bellart, the Attorney-General, had said even in 1819: 'If Louis XVIII. does not consent to strike such or such a blow, to make away with such or such

a prince, is it because he hates his brother? He must wish to leave him heir to a revolution.'

Peyrade's door was graced with a slate, on which very strange marks might sometimes be seen, figures scrawled in chalk. This sort of devil's algebra bore the clearest meaning to the initiated.

Lydie's rooms, opposite to Peyrade's shabby lodging, consisted of an anteroom, a little drawing-room, a bedroom, and a small dressing-room. The door, like that of Peyrade's room, was constructed of a plate of sheet-iron three lines thick, sandwiched between two strong oak planks, fitted with locks and elaborate hinges, making it as impossible to force it as if it were a prison door. Thus, though the house had a public passage through it, with a shop below and no doorkeeper, Lydie lived there without a fear. The dining-room, the little drawing-room, and her bedroom—every window-balcony a hanging garden—were luxurious in their Dutch cleanliness.

The Flemish nurse had never left Lydie, whom she called her daughter. The two went to church with a regularity that gave the royalist grocer, who lived below, in the corner shop, an excellent opinion of the worthy Canquoëlle. The grocer's family, kitchen, and counter-jumpers occupied the first floor and the *entresol*; the landlord inhabited the second floor; and the third had been let for twenty years past to a lapidary. Each resident had a key of the street door. The grocer's wife was all the more willing to receive letters and parcels addressed to these three quiet households, because the grocer's shop had a letter-box.

Without these details, strangers, or even those who know Paris well, could not have understood the privacy and quietude, the isolation and safety which made this house exceptional in Paris. After midnight, Père Canquoëlle could hatch plots, receive spies or ministers, wives or hussies, without any one on earth knowing anything about it.

Peyrade, of whom the Flemish woman would say to the grocer's cook, 'He would not hurt a fly!' was regarded as the best of men. He grudged his daughter nothing. Lydie, who had been taught music by Schmucke, was herself a musician capable of composing; she could wash in a sepia drawing, and paint in gouache and water-colour. Every Sunday Peyrade dined at home with her. On that day this worthy was wholly paternal.

Lydie, religious but not a bigot, took the Sacrament at Easter, and confessed every month. Still, she allowed herself from time to time to be treated to the play. She walked in the Tuileries when it was fine. These were all her pleasures, for she led a sedentary life. Lydie, who worshipped her father, knew absolutely nothing of his sinister gifts and dark employments. Not a wish had ever disturbed this pure child's pure life. Slight and handsome like her mother, gifted with an exquisite voice, and a delicate face framed in fine fair hair, she looked like one of those angels, mystical rather than real, which some of the early painters grouped in the background of the Holy Family. The glance of her blue eyes seemed to bring a beam from the sky on those she favoured with a look. Her dress, quite simple, with no exaggeration of fashion, had a delightful middle-class modesty. Picture to yourself an old Satan as the father of an angel, and purified in her divine presence, and you will have an idea of Peyrade and his daughter. If anybody had soiled this jewel, her father would have invented, to swallow him alive, one of those dreadful plots in which, under the Restoration, the unhappy wretches were trapped who were designate to die on the scaffold. A thousand crowns were ample maintenance for Lydie and Katt, whom she called nurse.

As Peyrade turned into the Rue des Moineaux, he saw Contenson; he outstripped him, went upstairs before him, heard the man's steps on the stairs, and admitted him before the woman had put her nose out of the

kitchen door. A bell rung by the opening of a glass door, on the third story where the lapidary lived, warned the residents on that and the fourth floors when a visitor was coming to them. It need hardly be said that, after midnight, Peyrade muffled this bell.

'What is up in such a hurry, Philosopher?'

Philosopher was the nickname bestowed on Contenson by Peyrade, and well merited by this Epictetus among police agents. The name of Contenson, alas! hid one of the most ancient names of feudal Normandy.

'Well, there is something like ten thousand francs to be netted.'

'What is it? Political?'

'No, a piece of idiotcy. Baron de Nucingen, you know, the old certified swindler, is neighing after a woman he saw in the Bois de Vincennes, and she has got to be found, or he will die of love.—They had a consultation of doctors yesterday, by what his man tells me.—I have already eased him of a thousand francs under pretence of seeking the fair one.'

And Contenson related Nucingen's meeting with Esther, adding that the Baron had now some further information.

'All right,' said Peyrade, 'we will find his Dulcinea; tell the Baron to come to-night in a carriage to the Champs-Elysées—the corner of the Avenue de Gabriel and the Allée de Marigny.'

Peyrade saw Contenson out, and knocked at his daughter's rooms, as he always knocked to be let in. He was full of glee; chance had just offered the means, at last, of getting the place he longed for.

He flung himself into a deep armchair, after kissing Lydie on the forehead, and said—

'Play me something.'

Lydie played him a composition for the piano by Beethoven.

'That is very well played, my pet,' said he, taking

Lydie on his knees. 'Do you know that we are one-and-twenty years old? We must get married soon, for our old daddy is more than seventy——'

'I am quite happy here,' said she.

'You love no one but your ugly old father?' asked Peyrade.

'Why, whom should I love?'

'I am dining at home, my darling; go and tell Katt. I am thinking of settling, of getting an appointment, and finding a husband worthy of you; some good young man, very clever, whom you may some day be proud of——'

'I have never seen but one yet that I should have liked for a husband——'

'You have seen one then?'

'Yes, in the Tuileries,' replied Lydie. 'He walked past me; he was giving his arm to the Comtesse de Sérizy.'

'And his name is?'

'Lucien de Rubempré.—I was sitting with Katt under a lime-tree, thinking of nothing. There were two ladies sitting by me, and one said to the other, "There are Madame de Sérizy and that handsome Lucien de Rubempré."—I looked at the couple the two ladies were watching. "Oh, my dear!" said the other, "some women are very lucky! That woman is allowed to do everything she pleases just because she was a de Ronquerolles, and her husband is in power."—"But, my dear," said the other lady, "Lucien costs her very dear."—What did she mean, papa?'

'Just nonsense, such as people of fashion will talk,' replied Peyrade, with an air of perfect candour. 'Perhaps they were alluding to political matters.'

'Well, in short, you asked me a question, so I answer you. If you want me to marry, find me a husband just like that young man.'

'Silly child!' replied her father. 'The fact that a

man is handsome is not always a sign of goodness. Young men gifted with an attractive appearance meet with no obstacles at the beginning of life, so they make no use of any talent; they are corrupted by the advances made to them by society, and they have to pay interest later for their attractiveness!—What I should like for you is what the middle classes, the rich, and the fools leave unholpen and unprotected——'

'What, father?'

'An unrecognised man of talent. But, there, child; I have it in my power to hunt through every garret in Paris, and carry out your programme by offering for your affection a man as handsome as the young scamp you speak of; but a man of promise, with a future before him destined to glory and fortune.—By the way, I was forgetting. I must have a whole flock of nephews, and among them there must be one worthy of you!—I will write, or get some one to write to Provence.'

A strange coincidence! At this moment a young man, half-dead of hunger and fatigue, who had come on foot from the department of Vaucluse—a nephew of Père Canquoëlle's, in search of his uncle, was entering Paris through the Barrière de l'Italie. In the day-dreams of the family, ignorant of this uncle's fate, Peyrade had supplied the text for many hopes; he was supposed to have returned from India with millions! Stimulated by these fireside romances, this grand-nephew, named Théodore, had started on a voyage round the world in quest of this eccentric uncle.

After enjoying for some hours the joys of paternity, Peyrade, his hair washed and dyed—for his powder was a disguise—dressed in a stout, coarse, blue frock-coat buttoned up to the chin, and a black cloak, shod in strong, thick-soled boots, furnished himself with a private card and walked slowly along the Avenue Gabriel, where Contenson, dressed as an old costermonger

woman, met him in front of the gardens of the Elysée-Bourbon.

'Monsieur de Saint-Germain,' said Contenson, giving his old chief the name he was officially known by, 'you have put me in the way of making five hundred pieces (francs); but what I came here for was to tell you that that damned Baron, before he gave me the shiners, had been to ask questions at the house (the Préfecture of Police).'

'I shall want you, no doubt,' replied Peyrade. 'Look up numbers 7, 10, and 21; we can employ those men without any one finding it out, either at the Police Ministry or at the Préfecture.'

Contenson went back to a post near the carriage in which Monsieur de Nucingen was waiting for Peyrade.

'I am Monsieur de Saint-Germain,' said Peyrade to the Baron, raising himself to look over the carriage door.

'Ver' goot; get in mit me,' replied the Baron, ordering the coachman to go on slowly to the Arc de l'Etoile.

'You have been to the Préfecture of Police, Monsieur le Baron? That was not fair. Might I ask what you said to M. le Préfet, and what he said in reply?' asked Peyrade.

'Before I should gife fife hundert francs to a filain like Contenson, I vant to know if he had earned dem. I simply said to the Préfet of Police dat I vant to employ ein agent name Peyrate to go abroat in a delicate matter, an' should I trust him—unlimited!—The Préfet telt me you vas a very clefer man an' ver' honest man. An' dat vas everyting.'

'And now that you have learnt my true name, Monsieur le Baron, will you tell me what it is you want?'

When the Baron had given a long and copious explanation, in his hideous Polish-Jew dialect, of his meeting with Esther and the cry of the man behind the carriage, and his vain efforts, he ended by relating

what had occurred at his house the night before, Lucien's involuntary smile, and the opinion expressed by Bianchon and some other young dandies that there must be some acquaintance between him and the unknown fair.

'Listen to me, Monsieur le Baron; you must, in the first instance, place ten thousand francs in my hands, on account for expenses; for, to you, this is a matter of life or death; and as your life is a business-manufactory, nothing must be left undone to find this woman for you. Oh, you are caught!——'

'Ja, I am caught!'

'If more money is wanted, Baron, I will let you know; put your trust in me,' said Peyrade. 'I am not a spy, as you perhaps imagine. In 1807 I was Commissioner-General of Police at Antwerp; and now that Louis XVIII. is dead, I may tell you in confidence that for seven years I was the chief of his counter-police. So there is no beating me down. You must understand, Monsieur le Baron, that it is impossible to make any estimate of the cost of each man's conscience before going into the details of such an affair. Be quite easy; I shall succeed. Do not fancy that you can satisfy me with a sum of money; I want something else for my reward——'

'So long as dat is not a kingtom!' said the Baron.

'It is less than nothing to you.'

'Den I am your man.'

'You know the Kellers?'

'Oh! ver' well.'

'François Keller is the Comte de Gondreville's son-in-law, and the Comte de Gondreville and his son-in-law dined with you yesterday.'

'Who der teufel tolt you dat?' cried the Baron. 'Dat vill be Georche; he is alvays a gossip.' Peyrade smiled, and the banker at once formed strange suspicions of his manservant.

'The Comte de Gondreville is quite in a position to obtain me a place I covet at the Préfecture of Police;

within forty-eight hours the préfet will have notice that such a place is to be created,' said Peyrade in continuation. 'Ask for it for me; get the Comte de Gondreville to interest himself in the matter with some degree of warmth—and you will thus repay me for the service I am about to do you. I ask your word only; for, if you fail me, sooner or later you will curse the day you were born—you have Peyrade's word for that.'

'I gif you mein vort of honour to do vat is possible.'

'If I do no more for you than is possible, it will not be enough.'

'Vell, vell, I vill act qvite frankly.'

'Frankly—that is all I ask,' said Peyrade, 'and frankness is the only thing at all new that you and I can offer to each other.'

'Frankly,' echoed the Baron. 'Vere shall I put you down.'

'At the corner of the Pont Louis XVI.'

'To the Pont de la Chambre,' said the Baron to the footman at the carriage door.

'Then I am to get dat unknown person,' said the Baron to himself as he drove home.

'What a queer business!' thought Peyrade, going back on foot to the Palais-Royal, where he intended trying to multiply his ten thousand francs by three, to make a little fortune for Lydie. 'Here am I required to look into the private concerns of the very young man who has bewitched my little girl by a glance. He is, I suppose, one of those men who have an eye for a woman,' said he to himself, using an expression of a language of his own, in which his observations, or Corentin's, were summed up in words that were anything rather than classical, but, for that very reason, energetic and picturesque.

The Baron de Nucingen, when he went in, was an altered man; he astonished his household and his wife

by showing them a face full of life and colour, so cheerful did he feel.

'Our shareholders had better look out for themselves,' said du Tillet to Rastignac.

They were all at tea, in Delphine de Nucingen's boudoir, having come in from the opera.

'Ja,' said the Baron, smiling; 'I feel ver' much dat I shall do some business.'

'Then you have seen the fair being?' asked Madame de Nucingen.

'No,' said he; 'I have only hoped to see her.'

'Do men ever love their wives so?' cried Madame de Nucingen, feeling, or affecting to feel, a little jealous.

'When you have got her, you must ask us to sup with her,' said du Tillet to the Baron, 'for I am very curious to study the creature who has made you so young as you are.'

'She is a *cheff-d'œufre* of creation!' replied the old banker.

'He will be swindled like a boy,' said Rastignac in Delphine's ear.

'Pooh! he makes quite enough money to——'

'To give a little back, I suppose,' said du Tillet, interrupting the Baroness.

Nucingen was walking up and down the room as if his legs had the fidgets.

'Now is your time to make him pay your fresh debts,' said Rastignac in the Baroness's ear.

At this very moment Carlos was leaving the Rue Taitbout full of hope; he had been there to give some last advice to Europe, who was to play the principal part in the farce devised to take in the Baron de Nucingen. He was accompanied as far as the Boulevard by Lucien, who was not at all easy at finding this demon so perfectly disguised that even he had only recognised him by his voice.

'Where the devil did you find a handsomer woman than Esther?' he asked his evil genius.

'My boy, there is no such thing to be found in Paris. Such a complexion is not made in France.'

'I assure you, I am still quite amazed. Venus Callipyge has not such a figure. A man would lose his soul for her. But where did she spring from?'

'She was the handsomest girl in London. Drunk with gin, she killed her lover in a fit of jealousy. The lover was a wretch of whom the London police are well quit, and this woman has been packed off to Paris for a time to let the matter blow over. The hussy was well brought up—the daughter of a clergyman. She speaks French as if it were her mother tongue. She does not know, and never will know, why she is here. She was told that if you took a fancy to her she might fleece you of millions, but that you were as jealous as a tiger, and she was told how Esther lived.'

'But supposing Nucingen should prefer her to Esther?'

'Ah, it is out at last!' cried Carlos. 'You dread now lest what dismayed you yesterday should not take place after all! Be quite easy. That fair and fair-haired girl has blue eyes; she is the antipodes of the beautiful Jewess, and only such eyes as Esther's could ever stir a man so rotten as Nucingen. What the devil! you could not hide an ugly woman. When this puppet has played her part, I will send her off in safe custody to Rome or to Madrid, where she will be the rage.'

'If we have her only for a short time,' said Lucien, 'I will go back to her——'

'Go, my boy, amuse yourself. You will be a day older to-morrow. For my part, I must wait for some one whom I have instructed to learn what is going on at the Baron de Nucingen's.'

'Who?'

'His valet's mistress; for, after all, we must keep our-

selves informed at every moment of what is going on in the enemy's camp.'

At midnight, Paccard, Esther's tall *chasseur*, met Carlos on the Pont des Arts, the most favourable spot in all Paris for saying a few words which no one must overhear. All the time they talked the servant kept an eye on one side, while his master looked out on the other.

'The Baron went to the Préfecture of Police this morning between four and five,' said the man, 'and he boasted this evening that he should find the woman he saw in the Bois de Vincennes—he had been promised it——'

'We are watched!' said Carlos. 'By whom?'

'They have already employed Louchard the bailiff.'

'That would be child's play,' replied Carlos. 'We need fear nothing but the guardians of public safety, the criminal police; and so long as that is not set in motion, we can go on!'

'That is not all.'

'What else?'

'Our chums of the hulks.—I saw Lapouraille yesterday—— He has choked off a married couple, and has bagged ten thousand five-franc pieces—in gold.'

'He will be nabbed,' said Jacques Collin. 'That is the Rue Boucher crime.'

'What is the order of the day?' said Paccard, with the respectful demeanour a marshal must have assumed when taking his orders from Louis XVIII.

'You must get out every evening at ten o'clock,' replied Herrera. 'Make your way pretty briskly to the Bois de Vincennes, the Bois de Meudon, and de Ville-d'Avray. If any one should follow you, let them do it; be free of speech, chatty, open to a bribe. Talk about Rubempré's jealousy and his mad passion for Madame, saying that he would not on any account have it known that he had a mistress of that kind.'

'Enough.—Must I have any weapons?'

'Never!' exclaimed Carlos vehemently. 'A weapon? Of what use would that be? To get us into a scrape. Do not under any circumstances use your hunting-knife. When you know that you can break the strongest man's legs by the trick I showed you—when you can hold your own against three armed warders, feeling quite sure that you can account for two of them before they have got out flint and steel, what is there to be afraid of? Have not you your cane?'

'To be sure,' said the man.

Paccard, nicknamed The Old Guard, Old Wide-Awake, or The Right Man—a man with legs of iron, arms of steel, Italian whiskers, hair like an artist's, a beard like a sapper's, and a face as colourless and immovable as Contenson's, kept his spirit to himself, and rejoiced in a sort of drum-major appearance which disarmed suspicion. A fugitive from Poissy or Melun has no such serious self-consciousness and belief in his own merit. As Giafar to the Haroun el Rasheed of the hulks, he served him with the friendly admiration which Peyrade felt for Corentin.

This huge fellow, with a small body in proportion to his legs, flat-chested, and lean of limb, stalked solemnly about on his two long pins. Whenever his right leg moved, his right eye took in everything around him with the placid swiftness peculiar to thieves and spies. The left eye followed the right eye's example. Wiry, nimble, ready for anything at any time, but for a weakness for Dutch courage Paccard would have been perfect, Jacques Collin used to say, so completely was he endowed with the talents indispensable to a man at war with society; but the master had succeeded in persuading his slave to drink only in the evening. On going home at night, Paccard tippled the liquid gold poured into small glasses out of a pot-bellied stone jar from Danzig.

'We will make them open their eyes,' said Paccard,

putting on his grand hat and feathers after bowing to Carlos, whom he called his Confessor.

These were the events which had led three men, so clever, each in his way, as Jacques Collin, Peyrade, and Corentin, to a hand-to-hand fight on the same ground, each exerting his talents in a struggle for his own passions or interests. It was one of those obscure but terrible conflicts on which are expended in marches and countermarches, in strategy, skill, hatred, and vexation, the powers that might make a fine fortune. Men and means were kept absolutely secret by Peyrade, seconded in this business by his friend Corentin—a business they thought but a trifle. And so, as to them, history is silent, as it is on the true causes of many revolutions.

But this was the result—

Five days after Monsieur de Nucingen's interview with Peyrade in the Champs Elysées, a man of about fifty called in the morning, stepping out of a handsome cab, and flinging the reins to his servant. He had the dead-white complexion which a life in the 'world' gives to diplomates, was dressed in blue cloth, and had a general air of fashion—almost that of a Minister of State.

He inquired of the servant who sat on a bench on the steps whether the Baron de Nucingen were at home; and the man respectfully threw open the splendid plate-glass doors.

'Your name, sir?' said the footman.

'Tell the Baron that I have come from the Avenue Gabriel,' said Corentin. 'If anybody is with him, be sure not to say so too loud, or you will find yourself out of place!'

A minute later the man came back and led Corentin by the back passages to the Baron's private room.

Corentin and the banker exchanged impenetrable glances, and both bowed politely.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said Corentin, 'I come in the name of Peyrade——'

'Ver' goot!' said the Baron, fastening the bolts of both doors.

'Monsieur de Rubempré's mistress lives in the Rue Taitbout, in the appartement formerly occupied by Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, M. de Granville's ex-mistress—the Attorney-General——'

'Vat, so near to me?' exclaimed the Baron. 'Dat is ver' strange.'

'I can quite understand your being crazy about that splendid creature; it was a pleasure to me to look at her,' replied Corentin. 'Lucien is so jealous of the girl that he never allows her to be seen; and she loves him devotedly; for in four years, since she succeeded la Bellefeuille in those rooms, inheriting her furniture and her profession, neither the neighbours, nor the porter, nor the other tenants in the house have ever set eyes on her. My lady never stirs out but at night. When she sets out, the blinds of the carriage are pulled down, and she is closely veiled.

'Lucien has other reasons besides jealousy for concealing this woman. He is to be married to Clotilde de Grandlieu, and he is at this moment Madame de Sérizy's favourite fancy. He naturally wishes to keep a hold on his fashionable mistress and on his promised bride. So, you are master of the position, for Lucien will sacrifice his pleasure to his interests and his vanity. You are rich; this is probably your last chance of happiness; be liberal. You can gain your end through her waiting-maid. Give the slut ten thousand francs; she will hide you in her mistress's bedroom. It must be quite worth that to you.'

No figure of speech could describe the short, precise tone of finality in which Corentin spoke; the Baron could not fail to observe it, and his face expressed his astonishment—an expression he had long since expunged from his impenetrable features.

'I have also to ask you for five thousand francs for my friend Peyrade, who has dropped five of your thousand-franc notes—a tiresome accident,' Corentin went on, in a lordly tone of command. 'Peyrade knows his Paris too well to spend money in advertising, and he trusts entirely to you. But this is not the most important point,' added Corentin, checking himself in such a way as to make the request for money seem quite a trifle. 'If you do not want to end your days miserably, get the place for Peyrade that he asked you to procure for him—and it is a thing you can easily do. The Chief of the General Police must have had notice of the matter yesterday. All that is needed is to get Gondreville to speak to the Préfet of Police.—Very well, just say to Malin, Comte de Gondreville, that it is to oblige one of the men who relieved him of MM. de Simeuse, and he will work it——'

'Here den, Mensieur,' said the Baron, taking out five thousand-franc notes and handing them to Corentin.

'The waiting-maid is great friends with a tall chasseur named Paccard, living in the Rue de Provence, over a carriage-builder's; he goes out as heyduque to persons who give themselves princely airs. You can get at Madame van Bogseck's woman through Paccard, a brawny Piemontese, who has a liking for vermouth.'

This information, gracefully thrown in as a postscript, was evidently the return for the five thousand francs. The Baron was trying to guess Corentin's place in life, for he quite understood that the man was rather a master of spies than a spy himself; but Corentin remained to him as mysterious as an inscription is to an archæologist when three-quarters of the letters are missing.

'Vat is dat maid called?' he asked.

'Eugénie,' replied Corentin, who bowed and withdrew.

The Baron, in a transport of joy, left his business for the day, shut up his office, and went up to his rooms in the happy frame of mind of a young man of twenty looking forward to his first meeting with his first mistress.

The Baron took all the thousand-franc notes out of his private cash-box—a sum sufficient to make a whole village happy, fifty-five thousand francs—and stuffed them into the pocket of his coat. But a millionaire's lavishness can only be compared with his eagerness for gain. As soon as a whim or a passion is to be gratified, money is dross to a Crœsus; in fact, he finds it harder to have whims than gold. A keen pleasure is the rarest thing in these satiated lives, full of the excitement that comes of great strokes of speculation, in which these dried-up hearts have burnt themselves out.

For instance, one of the richest capitalists in Paris one day met an extremely pretty little working-girl. Her mother was with her, but the girl had taken the arm of a young fellow in very doubtful finery, with a very smart swagger. The millionaire fell in love with the girl at first sight; he followed her home, he went in; he heard all her story, a record of alternations of dancing at Mabille and days of starvation, of play-going and hard work; he took an interest in it, and left five thousand-franc notes under a five-franc piece—an act of generosity abused. Next day a famous upholsterer, Braschon, came to take the damsel's orders, furnished rooms that she had chosen, and laid out twenty thousand francs. She gave herself up to the wildest hopes, dressed her mother to match, and flattered herself she would find a place for her ex-lover in an insurance office. She waited—a day, two days—then a week, two weeks. She thought herself bound to be faithful; she got into debt. The capitalist, called away to Holland, had forgotten the girl; he never went once to the Paradise where he had placed her, and from which she fell as low as it is possible to fall even in Paris.

Nucingen did not gamble, Nucingen did not patronise the Arts, Nucingen had no hobby; thus he flung himself into his passion for Esther with a headlong blindness, on which Carlos Herrera had confidently counted.

After his breakfast, the Baron sent for Georges, his

body-servant, and desired him to go to the Rue Taitbout and ask Mademoiselle Eugénie, Madame van Bogseck's maid, to come to his office on a matter of importance.

'You shall look out for her,' he added, 'an' make her valk up to my room, and tell her I shall make her fortune.'

Georges had the greatest difficulty in persuading Europe-Eugénie to come.

'Madame never lets me go out,' said she; 'I might lose my place,' and so forth; and Georges sang her praises loudly to the Baron, who gave him ten louis.

'If Madame goes out without her this evening,' said Georges to his master, whose eyes glowed like carbuncles, 'she will be here by ten o'clock.'

'Goot. You shall come to dress me at nine o'clock—and do my hair. I shall look so goot as possible. I belief I shall really see dat mistress—or money is not money any more.'

The Baron spent an hour, from noon till one, in dyeing his hair and whiskers. At nine in the evening, having taken a bath before dinner, he made a toilet worthy of a bridegroom and scented himself—a perfect Adonis. Madame de Nucingen, informed of this metamorphosis, gave herself the treat of inspecting her husband.

'Good heavens!' cried she, 'what a ridiculous figure! Do, at least, put on a black satin stock instead of that white neckcloth which makes your whiskers look so black; besides, it is so "Empire," quite the old fogey. You look like some superannuated parliamentary counsel. And take out these diamond buttons; they are worth a hundred thousand francs a-piece—that slut will ask you for them, and you will not be able to refuse her; and if a baggage is to have them, I may as well wear them as earrings.'

The unhappy banker, struck by the wisdom of his wife's reflections, obeyed reluctantly.

'Ridikilous, ridikilous! I hafe never telt you dat you

shall be ridikilous when you dressed yourself so smart to see your little Mensieur de Rastignac!'

'I should hope that you never saw me make myself ridiculous. Am I the woman to make such blunders in the first syllable of my dress? Come, turn about. Button your coat up to the neck, all but the two top buttons, as the Duc de Maufrigneuse does. In short, try to look young.'

'Monsieur,' said Georges, 'here is Mademoiselle Eugénie.

'Adié, Motame,' said the banker, and he escorted his wife as far as her own rooms, to make sure that she should not overhear their conference.

On his return, he took Europe by the hand and led her into his room with a sort of ironical respect.

'Vell, my chilt, you are a happy creature, for you are de maid of dat most beautiful voman in de vorlt. And your fortune shall be made if you vill talk to her for me and in mine interests.'

'I would not do such a thing for ten thousand francs!' exclaimed Europe. 'I would have you to know, Monsieur le Baron, that I am an honest girl.'

'Oh yes. I expect to pay dear for your honesty. In business dat is vat ve call curiosity.'

'And that is not everything,' Europe went on. 'If you should not take Madame's fancy—and that is on the cards—she would be angry, and I am done for!—and my place is worth a thousand francs a year.'

'De capital to make ein tousant franc is tventy tousand franc; and if I shall gif you dat, you shall not lose noting.'

'Well, to be sure, if that is the tone you take about it, my worthy old fellow,' said Europe, 'that is quite another story.—Where is the money?'

'Here,' replied the Baron, holding up the banknotes, one at a time.

He noted the flash struck by each in turn from Europe's eyes, betraying the greed he had counted on.

'That pays for my place, but how about my principles, my conscience?' said Europe, cocking her crafty little nose, and giving the Baron a serio-comic leer.

'Your conscience shall not be pait for so much as your place; but I shall say fife tousand franc more,' said he, adding five thousand-franc notes.

'No, no. Twenty thousand for my conscience, and five thousand for my place if I lose it——'

'Yust vat you please,' said he, adding the five notes. 'But to earn dem you shall hite me in your lady's room by night ven she shall be 'lone.'

'If you swear never to tell who let you in, I agree. But I warn you of one thing—Madame is as strong as a Turk, she is madly in love with Monsieur de Rubempré, and if you paid a million francs in banknotes she would never be unfaithful to him. It is very silly, but that is her way when she is in love; she is worse than an honest woman, I tell you! When she goes out for a drive in the woods at night, Monsieur very seldom stays at home. She is gone out this evening, so I can hide you in my room. If Madame comes in alone, I will fetch you; you can wait in the drawing-room. I will not lock the door into her room, and then—well, the rest is your concern—so be ready.'

'I shall pay you the twenty-fife tousand francs in dat drawing-room.—You gife—I gife!'

'Indeed!' said Europe, 'you are so confiding as all that? On my word!'

'Oh, you will hafe your chance to fleece me yet. We shall be friends.'

'Well, then, be in the Rue Taitbout at midnight; but bring thirty thousand francs about you. A waiting-woman's honesty, like a hackney cab, is much dearer after midnight.'

'It shall be more prudent if I gife you a cheque on my bank——'

'No, no,' said Europe. 'Notes, or the bargain is off.'

So at one in the morning the Baron de Nucingen, hidden in the garret where Europe slept, was suffering all the anxieties of a man who hopes to triumph. His blood seemed to him to be tingling in his toe-nails, and his head ready to burst like an overheated steam engine.

'I had more dan one hundert tousand crowns' vort of enjoyment—in my mind,' said he to du Tillet when telling him the story.

He listened to every little noise in the street, and at two in the morning he heard his mistress's carriage far away on the boulevard. His heart beat vehemently under his silk waistcoat as the gate turned on its hinges. He was about to behold the heavenly, the glowing face of his Esther!—the clatter of the carriage-step and the slam of the door struck upon his heart. He was more agitated in expectation of this supreme moment than he would have been if his fortune had been at stake.

'Ah, ha!' cried he, 'dis is vat I call to lif—it is too much to lif; I shall be incapable of everything.'

'Madame is alone; come down,' said Europe, looking in. 'Above all, make no noise, great elephant.'

'Great Elephant!' he repeated, laughing, and walking as if he trod on red-hot iron.

Europe led the way, carrying a candle.

'Here—count dem!' said the Baron when he reached the drawing-room, holding out the notes to Europe.

Europe took the thirty notes very gravely and left the room, locking the banker in.

Nucingen went straight to the bedroom, where he found the handsome Englishwoman.

'Is that you, Lucien?' said she.

'Nein, my peauty,' said Nucingen, but he said no more.

He stood speechless on seeing a woman the very antipodes to Esther; fair hair where he had seen black, slenderness where he had admired a powerful frame! A

soft English evening where he had looked for the bright sun of Arabia.

'Hey day! where have you come from?—who are you?—what do you want?' cried the Englishwoman, pulling the bell, which made no sound.

'The bells dey are in cotton-vool, but hafe not any fear—I shall go 'vay,' said he. 'Dat is dirty tousant franc I hafe tron in de vater. Are you dat mistress of Mensieur Lucien de Rubempré?'

'Rather, my son,' said the lady, who spoke French well. 'But vat vas you?' she went on, mimicking Nucingen's accent.

'Ein man vat is ver' much took in,' replied he lamentably.

'Is a man took in ven he find a pretty voman?' asked she, with a laugh.

'Permit me to sent you to-morrow some chewels as a soufenir of de Baron von Nucingen.'

'Don't know him!' said she, laughing like a crazy creature. 'But the chewels will be welcome, my fat burglar friend.'

'You shall know him. Goot night, Motame. You are a tidbit for ein king; but I am only a poor banker more dan sixty year olt, and you hafe make me feel vat power the voman I lofe hafe ofer me since your difine beauty hafe not make me forget her.'

'Vell, dat is ver' pretty vat you say,' replied the Englishwoman.

'It is not so pretty vat she is dat I say it to.'

'You spoke of thirty thousand francs—to whom did you give them?'

'To dat hussy, your maid——'

The Englishwoman called Europe, who was not far off.

'Oh!' shrieked Europe, 'a man in Madame's room, and he is not Monsieur—how shocking!'

'Did he give you thirty thousand francs to let him in?'

'No, Madame, for we are not worth it, the pair of us.'

And Europe set to screaming 'Thief' so determinedly, that the banker made for the door in a fright, and Europe, tripping him up, rolled him down the stairs.

'Old wretch!' cried she, 'you would tell tales to my mistress! Thief! thief! stop thief!'

The enamoured Baron, in despair, succeeded in getting unhurt to his carriage, which he had left on the boulevard; but he was now at his wits' end as to whom to apply to.

'And pray, Madame, did you think to get my earnings out of me?' said Europe, coming back like a fury to the lady's room.

'I know nothing of French customs,' said the Englishwoman.

'But one word from me to-morrow to Monsieur, and you, Madame, would find yourself in the streets,' retorted Europe insolently.

'Dat dam' maid!' said the Baron to Georges, who naturally asked his master if all had gone well, 'hafe do me out of dirty tousant franc—but it vas my own fault, my own great fault——'

'And so Monsieur's dress was all wasted. The deuce is in it, I should advise you, Monsieur le Baron, not to have taken your tonic for nothing——'

'Georches, I shall be dying of despair. I hafe cold—I hafe ice on mein heart—no more of Esther, my good friend.'

Georges was always the Baron's friend when matters were serious.

Two days after this scene, which Europe related far more amusingly than it can be written, because she told it with much mimicry, Carlos and Lucien were breakfasting *tête-à-tête*.

'My dear boy, neither the police nor anybody else must be allowed to poke a nose into our concerns,' said

Herrera in a low voice, as he lighted his cigar from Lucien's. 'It would not agree with us. I have hit on a plan, daring but effectual, to keep our Baron and his agents quiet. You must go to see Madame de Sérizy, and make yourself very agreeable to her. Tell her, in the course of conversation, that to oblige Rastignac, who has long been sick of Madame de Nucingen, you have consented to play fence for him to conceal a mistress. Monsieur de Nucingen, desperately in love with the woman Rastignac keeps hidden—that will make her laugh—has taken it into his head to set the police to keep an eye on you—on you, who are innocent of all his tricks, and whose interest with the Grandlieus may be seriously compromised. Then you must beg the Countess to secure her husband's support, for he is a Minister of State, to carry you to the Préfecture of Police.

'When you have got there, face to face with the Préfet, make your complaint, but as a man of political consequence, who will sooner or later be one of the motor powers of the huge machine of government. You will speak of the police as a statesman should, admiring everything, the Préfet included. The very best machines make oil-stains or splutter. Do not be angry till the right moment. You have no sort of grudge against Monsieur le Préfet, but persuade him to keep a sharp lookout on his people, and pity him for having to blow them up. The quieter and more gentlemanly you are, the more terrible will the Préfet be to his men. Then we shall be left in peace, and we may send for Esther back, for she must be belling like the does in the forest.'

The Préfet at that time was a retired magistrate. Retired magistrates make far too young Préfets. Partisans of the right, riding the high horse on points of law, they are not light-handed in arbitrary action such as critical circumstances often require; cases in which the

Préfet should be as prompt as a fireman called to a conflagration. So, face to face with the Vice-President of the Council of State, the Préfet confessed to more faults than the police really has, deplored its abuses, and presently was able to recollect the visit paid him by the Baron de Nucingen and his inquiries as to Peyrade. The Préfet, while promising to check the rash zeal of his agents, thanked Lucien for having come straight to him, promised secrecy, and affected to understand the intrigue.

A few fine speeches about personal liberty and the sacredness of home life were bandied between the Préfet and the Minister; Monsieur de Sérizy observing in conclusion that though the high interests of the kingdom sometimes necessitated illegal action in secret, crime began when these State measures were applied to private cases.

Next day, just as Peyrade was going to his beloved Café David, where he enjoyed watching the bourgeois eat, as an artist watches flowers open, a gendarme in private clothes spoke to him in the street.

'I was going to fetch you,' said he in his ear. 'I have orders to take you to the Préfecture.'

Peyrade called a hackney cab, and got in without saying a single word, followed by the gendarme.

The Préfet treated Peyrade as though he were the lowest warder on the hulks, walking to and fro in a side path of the garden of the Préfecture, which at that time was on the Quai des Orfèvres.

'It is not without good reason, Monsieur, that since 1830 you have been kept out of office. Do not you know to what risk you expose us, not to mention yourself?'

The lecture ended in a thunderstroke. The Préfet sternly informed poor Peyrade that not only would his yearly allowance be cut off, but that he himself would be narrowly watched. The old man took the shock with

an air of perfect calm. Nothing can be more rigidly expressionless than a man struck by lightning. Peyrade had lost all his stake in the game. He had counted on getting an appointment, and he found himself bereft of everything but the alms bestowed by his friend Corentin.

'I have been Préfet of Police myself; I think you perfectly right,' said the old man quietly to the functionary who stood before him in his judicial majesty, and who answered with a significant shrug.

'But allow me, without any attempt to justify myself, to point out that you do not know me at all,' Peyrade went on, with a keen glance at the Préfet. 'Your language is either too severe to a man who has been at the head of the police in Holland, or not severe enough for a mere spy. But, Monsieur le Préfet,' Peyrade added after a pause, while the other kept silence, 'bear in mind what I now have the honour of telling you: I have no intention of interfering with your police nor of attempting to justify myself, but you will presently discover that there is some one in this business who is being deceived; at this moment it is your humble servant; by and by you will say, "It was I."'

And he bowed to the chief, who sat passive to conceal his amazement.

Peyrade returned home, his legs and arms feeling broken, and full of cold fury with the Baron. Nobody but that burly banker could have betrayed a secret contained in the minds of Contenson, Peyrade, and Corentin. The old man accused the banker of wishing to avoid paying now that he had gained his end. A single interview had been enough to enable him to read the astuteness of this most astute of bankers.

'He tries to compound with every one, even with us; but I will be revenged,' thought the old fellow. 'I have never asked a favour of Corentin; I will ask him now to help me to be revenged on that imbecile money-box. Curse the Baron!—Well, you will know the stuff I am

made of one fine morning when you find your daughter disgraced!—But does he love his daughter, I wonder?'

By the evening of the day when this catastrophe had upset the old man's hopes he had aged by ten years. As he talked to his friend Corentin, he mingled his lamentations with tears wrung from him by the thought of the melancholy prospects he must bequeath to his daughter, his idol, his treasure, his peace-offering to God.

'We will follow the matter up,' said Corentin. 'First of all, we must be sure that it was the Baron who peached. Were we wise in enlisting Gondreville's support? That old rascal owes us too much not to be anxious to swamp us; indeed, I am keeping an eye on his son-in-law Keller, a simpleton in politics, and quite capable of meddling in some conspiracy to overthrow the elder Branch to the advantage of the younger.—I shall know to-morrow what is going on at Nucingen's, whether he has seen his beloved, and to whom we owe this sharp pull up.—Do not be out of heart. In the first place, the Préfet will not hold his appointment much longer; the times are big with revolution, and revolutions make good fishing for us.'

A peculiar whistle was just then heard in the street.

'That is Contenson,' said Peyrade, who put a light in the window, 'and he has something to say that concerns me.'

A minute later the faithful Contenson appeared in the presence of the two gnomes of the police, whom he revered as though they were two genii.

'What is up?' asked Corentin.

'A new thing! I was coming out of 113, where I lost everything, when whom do I spy under the gallery? Georges! The man has been dismissed by the Baron, who suspects him of treachery.'

'That is the effect of a smile I gave him,' said Peyrade.

'Bah! when I think of all the mischief I have known caused by smiles!' said Corentin.

'To say nothing of that caused by a whip-lash,' said Peyrade, referring to the Simeuse case. [In *Une Ténébreuse affaire.*] But, come, Contenson, what is going on?'

'This is what is going on,' said Contenson. 'I made Georges blab by getting him to treat me to an endless series of liqueurs of every colour—I left him tipsy; I must be as full as a still myself!—Our Baron has been to the Rue Taitbout, crammed with Pastilles du Serail. There he found the fair one you know of; but—a good joke! The English beauty is not his fair unknown!—And he has spent thirty thousand francs to bribe the lady's-maid, a piece of folly!

'That creature thinks itself a great man because it does mean things with great capital. Reverse the proposition, and you have the problem of which a man of genius is the solution.—The Baron came home in a pitiable condition. Next day Georges, to get his finger in the pie, said to his master—

'"Why, Monsieur le Baron, do you employ such blackguards? If you would only trust to me, I would find the unknown lady, for your description of her is enough. I would turn Paris upside down."—"Go ahead," says the Baron; "I shall reward you handsomely!"—Georges told me the whole story with the most absurd details. But—man is born to be rained upon!

'Next day the Baron received an anonymous letter something to this effect: "Monsieur de Nucingen is dying of love for an unknown lady; he has already spent a great deal utterly in vain; if he will repair at midnight to the end of the Neuilly Bridge, and get into the carriage behind which the chasseur he saw at Vincennes will be standing, allowing himself to be blindfolded, he will see the woman he loves. As his wealth may lead him to suspect the intentions of persons who proceed in such a

fashion, he may bring, as an escort, his faithful Georges. And there will be nobody in the carriage."—Off the Baron goes, taking Georges with him, but telling him nothing. They both submit to have their eyes bound up and their heads wrapped in veils; the Baron recognises the man-servant.

'Two hours later, the carriage, going at the pace of Louis XVIII.—God rest his soul! He knew what was meant by the police, he did!—pulled up in the middle of a wood. The Baron had the handkerchief off, and saw, in a carriage standing still, his adored fair—when, whiff! she vanished. And the carriage, at the same lively pace, brought him back to the Neuilly Bridge, where he found his own.

'Some one had slipped into Georges' hand a note to this effect: "How many banknotes will the Baron part with to be put into communication with his unknown fair?" Georges handed this to his master; and the Baron, never doubting that Georges was in collusion with me or with you, Monsieur Peyrade, to drive a hard bargain, turned him out of the house. What a fool that banker is! He ought not to have sent away Georges before he had known the unknown!'

'Then Georges saw the woman?' said Corentin.

'Yes,' replied Contenson.

'Well,' cried Peyrade, 'and what is she like?'

'Oh,' said Contenson, 'he said but one word—"A sun of loveliness."'

'We are being tricked by some rascals who beat us at the game,' said Peyrade. 'Those villains mean to sell their woman very dear to the Baron.'

'*Ja, mein Herr*,' said Contenson. 'And so, when I heard you got slapped in the face at the Préfecture, I made Georges blab.'

'I should very much like to know who it is that has stolen a march on me,' said Peyrade. 'We would measure our spurs!'

'We must play eavesdropper,' said Contenson.

'He is right,' said Peyrade. 'We must get into chinks to listen, and wait——'

'We will study that side of the subject,' cried Corentin. 'For the present, I am out of work. You, Peyrade, be a very good boy. We must always obey Monsieur le Préfet!'

'Monsieur de Nucingen wants bleeding,' said Contenson; 'he has too many banknotes in his veins.'

'But it was Lydie's marriage-portion I looked for there!' said Peyrade, in a whisper to Corentin.

'Now, come along, Contenson, let us be off, and leave our daddy to by-bye, by-bye!'

'Monsieur,' said Contenson to Corentin on the doorstep, 'what a queer piece of brokerage our good friend was planning! Heh!—What, marry a daughter with the price of—— Ah, ha! It would make a pretty little play, and very moral too, entitled "A Girl's Dower."'

'You are highly organised animals, indeed,' replied Corentin. 'What ears you have! Certainly Social Nature arms all her species with the qualities needed for the duties she expects of them! Society is second nature.'

'That is a highly philosophical view to take,' cried Contenson. 'A professor would work it up into a system.'

'Let us find out all we can,' replied Corentin with a smile, as he made his way down the street with the spy, 'as to what goes on at Monsieur de Nucingen's with regard to this girl—the main facts; never mind the details——'

'Just watch to see if his chimneys are smoking!' said Contenson.

'Such a man as the Baron de Nucingen cannot be happy incognito,' replied Corentin. 'And besides, we for whom men are but cards, ought never to be tricked by them.'

'By Gad! it would be the condemned gaol-bird amusing himself by cutting the executioner's throat.'

'You always have something droll to say,' replied Contenson, with a dim smile, that faintly wrinkled his set white face.

This business was exceedingly important in itself, apart from its consequences. If it were not the Baron who had betrayed Peyrade, who could have had any interest in seeing the Préfet of Police? From Corentin's point of view it seemed suspicious. Were there any traitors among his men! And as he went to bed, he wondered what Peyrade, too, was considering.

'Who can have gone to complain to the Préfet? Whom does the woman belong to?'

And thus, without knowing each other, Jacques Collin, Peyrade, and Corentin were converging to a common point; while the unhappy Esther, Nucingen, and Lucien were inevitably entangled in the struggle which had already begun, and of which the point of pride, peculiar to police agents, was making a war to the death.

Thanks to Europe's cleverness, the more pressing half of the sixty thousand francs of debt owed by Esther and Lucien was paid off. The creditors did not even lose confidence. Lucien and his evil genius could breathe for a moment. Like two wild animals, drinking for an instant of the waters of some pool, they could start again along the edge of the precipice where the strong man was guiding the weak man to the gibbet or to fortune.

'We are staking all now,' said Carlos to his puppet, 'to win or lose all. But, happily, the cards are bevelled, and the punters young.'

For some little time Lucien, by his terrible Mentor's orders, had been very attentive to Madame de Sérizy. It was, in fact, indispensable that Lucien should not be suspected of having a kept woman for his mistress. And in the pleasure of being loved, and the excitement of

fashionable life, he found a spurious power of forgetting. He obeyed Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu by never seeing her excepting in the Bois or the Champs-Elysées.

On the day after Esther was shut up in the park-keeper's house, the being who was to her so enigmatic and terrible, who weighed upon her soul, came to desire her to sign three pieces of stamped paper, made terrible by these fateful words: on the first, accepted payable for sixty thousand francs; on the second, accepted payable for a hundred and twenty thousand francs; on the third, accepted payable for a hundred and twenty thousand francs—three hundred thousand francs in all. By writing *Bon pour*, you simply promise to pay. The word *Accepted* constitutes a bill of exchange, and makes you liable to imprisonment. The word entails, on the person who is so imprudent as to sign, the risk of five years' imprisonment—a punishment which the police magistrate hardly ever inflicts, and which is reserved at the assizes for confirmed rogues. The law of imprisonment for debt is a relic of the days of barbarism, which combines with its stupidity the rare merit of being useless, inasmuch as it never catches swindlers.

'The point,' said the Spaniard to Esther, 'is to get Lucien out of his difficulties. We have debts to the tune of sixty thousand francs, and with these three hundred thousand francs we may perhaps pull through.'

Having antedated the bills by six months, Carlos had had them drawn on Esther by a man whom the county court had 'misunderstood,' and whose adventures, in spite of the excitement they had caused, were soon forgotten, hidden, lost, in the uproar of the great symphony of July 1830.

This young fellow, a most audacious adventurer, the son of a lawyer's clerk of Boulogne, near Paris, was named Georges Marie Destourny. His father, obliged by adverse circumstances to sell his connection, died in

1824, leaving his son without the means of living, after giving him a brilliant education, the folly of the lower middle class. At twenty-three the clever young law-student had denied his paternity by printing on his cards

Georges d'Estourny.

This card gave him an odour of aristocracy; and now, as a man of fashion, he was so impudent as to set up a tilbury and a groom and haunt the clubs. One line will account for this: he gambled on the Bourse with money intrusted to him by the kept women of his acquaintance. Finally he fell into the hands of the police, and was charged with playing at cards with too much luck.

He had accomplices, youths whom he had corrupted, his compulsory satellites, accessory to his fashion and his credit. Compelled to fly, he forgot to pay his differences on the Bourse. All Paris—the Paris of the Stock Exchange and Clubs—was still shaken by this double stroke of swindling.

In the days of his splendour Georges d'Estourny, a handsome youth, and, above all, a jolly fellow, as generous as a brigand chief, had for a few months 'protected' La Torpille. The false Abbé based his calculations on Esther's former intimacy with this famous scoundrel, an incident peculiar to women of her class.

Georges d'Estourny, whose ambition grew bolder with success, had taken under his patronage a man who had come from the depths of the country to carry on a business in Paris, and whom the Liberal party were anxious to indemnify for certain sentences endured with much courage in the struggle of the press with Charles x.'s government, the persecution being relaxed, however, during the Martignac administration. The Sieur Cérizet had then been pardoned, and he was thenceforth known as the Brave Cérizet.

Cérizet then, being patronised for form's sake by the

bigwigs of the Left, founded a house which combined the business of a general agency with that of a bank and a commission agency. It was one of those concerns which, in business, remind one of the servants who advertise in the papers as being able and willing to do everything. Cérizet was very glad to ally himself with Georges d'Estourny, who gave him hints.

Esther, in virtue of the anecdote about Ninon, might be regarded as the faithful guardian of part of Georges d'Estourny's fortune. An endorsement in the name of Georges d'Estourny made Carlos Herrera master of the money he had created. This forgery was perfectly safe so long as Mademoiselle Esther, or some one for her, could, or was bound to pay.

After making inquiries as to the house of Cérizet, Carlos perceived that he had to do with one of those humble men who are bent on making a fortune, but—lawfully. Cérizet, with whom d'Estourny had really deposited his moneys, had in hand a considerable sum with which he was speculating for a rise on the Bourse, a state of affairs which allowed him to style himself a banker. Such things are done in Paris; a man may be despised,—but money, never.

Carlos went off to Cérizet intending to work him after his manner; for, as it happened, he was master of all this worthy's secrets—a meet partner for d'Estourny.

Cérizet the Brave lived in an *entresol* in the Rue du Gros-Chenet, and Carlos, who had himself mysteriously announced as coming from Georges d'Estourny, found the self-styled banker quite pale at the name. The Abbé saw in this humble private room a little man with thin, light hair; and recognised him at once, from Lucien's description, as the Judas who had ruined David Séchard.

'Can we talk here without risk of being overheard?' said the Spaniard, now metamorphosed into a red-haired Englishman with blue spectacles, as clean and prim as a Puritan going to meeting.

'Why, Monsieur?' said Cérizet. 'Who are you?'

'Mr. William Barker, a creditor of M. d'Estourny's; and I can prove to you the necessity for keeping your doors closed if you wish it. We know, Monsieur, all about your connection with the Petit-Clauds, the Cointels, and the Séchards of Angoulême——'

On hearing these words, Cérizet rushed to the door and shut it, flew to another leading into a bedroom and bolted it; then he said to the stranger—

'Speak lower, Monsieur,' and he studied the sham Englishman as he asked him, 'What do you want with me?

'Dear me,' said William Barker, 'every one for himself in this world. You had the money of that rascal d'Estourny.—Be quite easy, I have not come to ask for it; but that scoundrel, who deserves hanging, between you and me, gave me these bills, saying that there might be some chance of recovering the money; and as I do not choose to prosecute in my own name, he told me you would not refuse to back them.'

Cérizet looked at the bills.

'But he is no longer at Frankfort,' said he.

'I know it,' replied Barker, 'but he may still have been there at the date of those bills——'

'I will not take the responsibility,' said Cérizet.

'I do not ask such a sacrifice of you,' replied Barker; 'you may be instructed to receive them. Endorse them, and I will undertake to recover the money.'

'I am surprised that d'Estourny should show so little confidence in me,' said Cérizet.

'In his position,' replied Barker, 'you can hardly blame him for having put his eggs in different baskets.'

'Can you believe——' the little broker began, as he handed back to the Englishman the bills of exchange formally accepted.

'I believe that you will take good care of his money,'

said Barker. 'I am sure of it! It is already on the green table of the Bourse.'

'My fortune depends——'

'On your appearing to lose it,' said Barker.

'Sir!' cried Cérizet.

'Look here, my dear Monsieur Cérizet,' said Barker, coolly interrupting him, 'you will do me a service by facilitating this payment. Be so good as to write me a letter in which you tell me that you are sending me these bills receipted on d'Estourny's account, and that the collecting officer is to regard the holder of the letter as the possessor of the three bills.'

'Will you give me your name?'

'No names,' replied the English capitalist. 'Put "The bearer of this letter and these bills."—You will be handsomely repaid for obliging me.'

'How?' said Cérizet.

'In one word—You mean to stay in France, do not you?'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'Well, Georges d'Estourny will never re-enter the country.'

'Pray why?'

'There are five persons at least to my knowledge who would murder him, and he knows it.'

'Then no wonder he is asking me for money enough to start him trading to the Indies!' cried Cérizet. 'And unfortunately he has compelled me to risk everything in State speculations. We already owe heavy differences to the house of du Tillet. I live from hand to mouth.'

'Withdraw your stakes.'

'Oh! if only I had known this sooner!' exclaimed Cérizet. 'I have missed my chance!'

'One last word,' said Barker. 'Keep your own counsel, you are capable of that; but you must be faithful too, which is perhaps less certain. We shall meet again, and I will help you to make a fortune.'

Having thus tossed this sordid soul a crumb of hope that would secure silence for some time to come, Carlos, still disguised as Barker, betook himself to a bailiff whom he could depend on, and instructed him to get the bills brought home to Esther.

'They will be paid all right,' said he to the officer. 'It is an affair of honour; only we want to do the thing regularly.'

Barker got a solicitor to represent Esther in court, so that judgment might be given in presence of both parties. The collecting officer, who was begged to act with civility, took with him all the warrants for procedure, and came in person to seize the furniture in the Rue Taitbout, where he was received by Europe. Her personal liability once proved, Esther was ostensibly liable, beyond dispute, for three hundred and more thousand francs of debts.

In all this Carlos displayed no great powers of invention. The farce of false debts is often played in Paris. There are many sub-Gobsecks and sub-Gigonnets who, for a percentage, will lend themselves to this subterfuge, and regard the infamous trick as a jest. In France everything—even a crime—is done with a laugh. By this means refractoryparents are made to pay, or rich mistresses who might drive a hard bargain, but who, face to face with flagrant necessity, or some impending dishonour, pay up, if with a bad grace. Maxime de Trailles had often used such means, borrowed from the comedies of the old stage. Carlos Herrera, who wanted to save the honour of his gown, as well as Lucien's, had worked the spell by a forgery not dangerous for him, but now so frequently practised that Justice is beginning to object. There is, it is said, a Bourse for falsified bills near the Palais Royal, where you may get a forged signature for three francs.

Before entering on the question of the hundred thou-

sand crowns that were to keep the door of the bedroom, Carlos determined first to extract a hundred thousand more from M. de Nucingen.

And this was the way: By his orders Asie got herself up for the Baron's benefit as an old woman fully informed as to the unknown beauty's affairs.

Hitherto, novelists of manners have placed on the stage a great many usurers; but the female money-lender has been overlooked, the Madame la Ressource of the present day—a very singular figure, euphemistically spoken of as a 'wardrobe purchaser'; a part that the ferocious Asie could play, for she had two old-clothes shops managed by women she could trust—one in the Temple, and the other in the Rue Neuve Saint-Marc.

'You must get into the skin of Madame de Saint-Estève,' said he.

Herrera wished to see Asie dressed.

The go-between arrived in a dress of flowered damask, made of the curtains of some dismantled boudoir, and one of those shawls of Indian design—out of date, worn, and valueless, which end their career on the backs of these women. She had a collar of magnificent lace, though torn, and a terrible bonnet; but her shoes were of fine kid, in which the flesh of her fat feet made a roll of black-lace stocking.

'And my waist buckle!' she exclaimed, displaying a piece of suspicious-looking finery, prominent on her cook's stomach. 'There's style for you! and my front!—Oh, Ma'me Nourisson has turned me out quite spiff!'

'Be as sweet as honey at first,' said Carlos; 'be almost timid, as suspicious as a cat; and, above all, make the Baron ashamed of having employed the police, without betraying that you quake before the constable. Finally, make your customer understand in more or less plain terms that you defy all the police in the world to discover his jewel. Take care to destroy your traces.

'When the Baron gives you a right to tap him on the stomach, and call him a pot-bellied old rip, you may be as insolent as you please, and make him trot like a footman.'

Nucingen—threatened by Asie with never seeing her again if he attempted the smallest espionage—met the woman on his way to the Bourse, in secret, in a wretched *entresol* in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc. How often, and with what rapture, have amorous millionaires trodden these squalid paths! the pavements of Paris know. Madame de Saint-Estève, by tossing the Baron from hope to despair by turns, brought him to the point when he insisted on being informed of all that related to the unknown beauty at *any cost*. Meanwhile, the law was put in force, and with such effect that the bailiffs, finding no resistance from Esther, put in an execution on her effects without losing a day.

Lucien, guided by his adviser, paid the recluse at Saint-Germain five or six visits. The merciless author of all these machinations thought this necessary to save Esther from pining to death, for her beauty was now their capital. When the time came for them to quit the park-keeper's lodge, he took Lucien and the poor girl to a place on the road whence they could see Paris, where no one could overhear them. They all three sat down in the rising sun, on the trunk of a felled poplar, looking over one of the finest prospects in the world, embracing the course of the Seine, with Montmartre, Paris, and Saint-Denis.

'My children,' said Carlos, 'your dream is over.—You, little one, will never see Lucien again; or if you should, you must have known him only for a few days, five years ago.'

'Death has come upon me then,' said she, without shedding a tear.

'Well, you have been ill these five years,' said Herrera. 'Imagine yourself to be consumptive, and die without

boring us with your lamentations. But you will see, you can still live, and very comfortably too.—Leave us, Lucien—go and gather sonnets!' said he, pointing to a field a little way off.

Lucien cast a look of humble entreaty at Esther, one of the looks peculiar to such men—week and greedy, with tender hearts and cowardly spirits. Esther answered with a bow of her head, which said—'I will hear the executioner, that I may know how to lay my head under the axe, and I shall have courage enough to die decently.'

The gesture was so gracious, but so full of dreadful meaning, that the poet wept; Esther flew to him, clasped him in her arms, drank away the tears, and said, 'Be quite easy!' one of those speeches that are spoken with the manner, the look, the tones of delirium.

Carlos then explained to her quite clearly, without attenuation, often with horrible plainness of speech, the critical position in which Lucien found himself, his connection with the Hotel Grandlieu, his splendid prospects if he should succeed; and finally, how necessary it was that Esther should sacrifice herself to secure him this triumphant future.

'What must I do?' cried she, with the eagerness of a fanatic.

'Obey me blindly,' said Carlos. 'And what have you to complain of? It rests with you to achieve a happy lot. You may be what Tullia is, what your old friends Florine, Mariette, and la Val-Noble are—the mistress of a rich man whom you need not love. When once our business is settled, your lover is rich enough to make you happy.'

'Happy!' said she, raising her eyes to heaven.

'You have lived in Paradise for four years,' said he. 'Can you not live on such memories?'

'I will obey you,' said she, wiping a tear from the corner of her eye. 'For the rest, do not worry yourself. You have said it; my love is a mortal disease.'

'That is not enough,' said Carlos; 'you must preserve your looks. At a little past two-and-twenty you are in the prime of your beauty, thanks to your past happiness. And, above all, be the 'Torpille' again. Be roguish, extravagant, cunning, merciless to the millionaire I put in your power. Listen to me! That man is a robber on a grand scale; he has been ruthless to many persons; he has grown fat on the fortunes of the widow and the orphan; you will avenge them!'

'Asie is coming to fetch you in a hackney coach, and you will be in Paris this evening. If you allow any one to suspect your connection with Lucien, you may as well blow his brains out at once. You will be asked where you have been for so long. You must say that you have been travelling with a desperately jealous Englishman.—You used to have wit enough to humbug people. Find such wit again now.'

Have you ever seen a gorgeous kite, the giant butterfly of childhood, twinkling with gilding, and soaring to the sky? The children forget the string that holds it, some passer-by cuts it, the gaudy toy turns head over heels, as the boys say, and falls with terrific rapidity. Such was Esther as she listened to Carlos.

WHAT LOVE COSTS AN OLD MAN

For a whole week Nucingen went almost every day to the shop in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc to bargain for the woman he was in love with. Here, sometimes under the name of Saint-Estève, sometimes under that of her tool, Madame Nourisson, Asie sat enthroned among beautiful clothes in that hideous condition when they have ceased to be dresses and are not yet rags.

The setting was in harmony with the appearance assumed by the woman, for these shops are among the most hideous characteristics of Paris. You find there the garments tossed aside by the skinny hand of Death; you hear, as it were, the gasping of consumption under a shawl, or you detect the agonies of beggary under a gown spangled with gold. The horrible struggle between luxury and starvation is written on filmy laces; you may picture the countenance of a queen under a plumed turban placed in an attitude that recalls and almost reproduces the absent features. It is all hideous amid prettiness! Juvenal's lash, in the hands of the appraiser, scatters the shabby muffs, the ragged furs of courtesans at bay.

There is a dunghill of flowers, among which here and there we find a bright rose plucked but yesterday and worn for a day; and on this an old hag is always to be seen crouching—first cousin to Usury, the skinflint bargainer, bald and toothless, and ever ready to sell the contents, so well is she used to sell the covering—the gown without the woman, or the woman without the gown!

Here Asie was in her element, like the warder among convicts, like a vulture red-beaked amid corpses; more terrible than the savage horrors that made the passer-by

shudder in astonishment sometimes, at seeing one of their youngest and sweetest reminiscences hung up in a dirty shop window, behind which a Saint-Estève sits and grins.

From vexation to vexation, a thousand francs at a time, the banker had gone so far as to offer sixty thousand francs to Madame de Saint-Estève, who still refused to help him, with a grimace that would have outdone any monkey. After a disturbed night, after confessing to himself that Esther completely upset his ideas, after realising some unexpected turns of fortune on the Bourse, he came to her one day, intending to give the hundred thousand francs on which Asie insisted, but he was determined to have plenty of information for the money.

'Well, have you made up your mind, old higgler?' said Asie, clapping him on the shoulder.

The most dishonouring familiarity is the first tax these women levy on the frantic passions or griefs that are confided to them; they never rise to the level of their clients; they make them squat beside them on their mudheap. Asie, it will be seen, obeyed her master admirably.

'Need must!' said Nucingen.

'And you have the best of the bargain,' said Asie. 'Women have been sold much dearer than this one to you — relatively speaking. There are women and women! De Marsay paid sixty thousand francs for Coralie, who is dead now. The woman you want cost a hundred thousand francs when new; but to you, you old goat, it is a matter of agreement.'

'But vere is she?'

'Ah! you shall see. I am like you—a gift for a gift! Oh, my good man, your adored one has been extravagant. These girls know no moderation. Your princess is at this moment what we call a fly by night——'

'A fly——?'

'Come, come, don't play the simpleton.—Louchard is at her heels, and I—I—have lent her fifty thousand francs——'

'Tventy-fife say!' cried the banker.

'Well, of course, twenty-five for fifty, that is only natural,' replied Asie. 'To do the woman justice, she is honesty itself. She had nothing left but herself, and says she to me: "My good Madame Saint-Estève, the bailiffs are after me; no one can help me but you. Give me twenty thousand francs. I will pledge my heart to you." Oh, she has a sweet heart; no one but me knows where it lies. Any folly on my part, and I should lose my twenty thousand francs.

'Formerly she lived in the Rue Taitbout. Before leaving — (her furniture was seized for costs — those rascally bailiffs!—You know them, you who are one of the great men on the Bourse)—well, before leaving, she is no fool, she let her rooms for two months to an Englishwoman, a splendid creature who had little thingummy—Rubempré—for a lover, and he was so jealous that he only let her go out at night. But as the furniture is to be seized, the Englishwoman has cut her stick, all the more because she cost too much for a little whipper-snapper like Lucien.'

'You cry up de goots,' said Nucingen.

'Naturally,' said Asie. 'I lend to the beauties; and it pays, for you get two commissions for one job.'

Asie was amusing herself by caricaturing the manners of a class of woman who are even greedier but more wheedling and mealy-mouthed than the Malay woman, and who put a gloss of the best motives on the trade they ply. Asie affected to have lost all her illusions, five lovers, and some children, and to have submitted to be robbed by everybody in spite of her experience. From time to time she exhibited some pawn-tickets, to prove how much bad luck there was in her line of business. She represented herself as pinched and in debt, and to crown all, she was so undisguisedly hideous that the Baron at last believed her to be all she said she was.

'Vell den, I shall pay de hundert tousant, and vere shall I see her?' said he, with the air of a man who has made up his mind to any sacrifice.

'My fat friend, you shall come this evening—in your carriage, of course—opposite the Gymnase. It is on the way,' said Asie. 'Stop at the corner of the Rue Sainte-Barbe. I will be on the lookout, and we will go and find my mortgaged beauty with the black hair.—Oh, she has splendid hair, has my mortgage. If she pulls out her comb, Esther is covered as if it were a pall. But though you are knowing in arithmetic, you strike me as a muff in other matters; and I advise you to hide the girl safely, for if she is found she will be clapped into Sainte-Pélagie the very next day.—And they are looking for her.'

'Shall it not be possible to get holt of de bills?' said the incorrigible bill-broker.

'The bailiffs have got them—but it is impossible. The girl has had a passion, and has spent some money left in her hands, which she is now called upon to pay. By the poker!—A queer thing is a heart of two-and-twenty.'

'Ver' goot, ver' goot, I shall arrange all dat,' said Nucingen, assuming a cunning look. 'It is qvite settled dat I shall protect her.'

'Well, old noodle, it is your business to make her fall in love with you, and you certainly have ample means to buy sham love as good as the real article. I will place your princess in your keeping; she is bound to stick to you, and after that I don't care.—But she is accustomed to luxury and the greatest consideration. I tell you, my boy, she is quite the lady.—If not, should I have given her twenty thousand francs?'

'Ver' goot, it is a pargain. Till dis efening.'

The Baron repeated the bridal toilet he had already once achieved; but this time, being certain of success, he took a double dose of pillules.

At nine o'clock he found the dreadful woman at the appointed spot, and took her into his carriage.

'Vere to?' said the Baron.

'Where?' echoed Asie. 'Rue de la Perle in the Marais—an address for the nonce; for your pearl is in the mud, but you will wash her clean.'

Having reached the spot, the false Madame de Saint-Estève said to Nucingen with a hideous smile—

'We must go a short way on foot; I am not such a fool as to have given you the right address.'

'You tink of eferytink!' said the Baron.

'It is my business,' said she.

Asie led Nucingen to the Rue Barbette, where, in furnished lodgings kept by an upholsterer, he was led up to the fourth floor.

On finding Esther in a squalid room, dressed as a work-woman, and employed on some embroidery, the millionaire turned pale. At the end of a quarter of an hour, while Asie affected to talk in whispers to Esther, the young old man could still hardly speak.

'Montemisselle,' said he at length to the unhappy girl, 'vill you be so goot as to let me be your protector?'

'Why, I cannot help myself, Monsieur,' replied Esther, letting fall two large tears.

'Do not veep. I shall make you de happiest of vomen. Only permit that I shall lof you—you shall see.'

'Well, well, child, the gentleman is reasonable,' said Asie. 'He knows that he is more than sixty, and he will be very kind to you. You see, my beauty, I have found you quite a father—I had to say so,' Asie whispered to the banker, who was not best pleased. 'You cannot catch swallows by firing a pistol at them.—Come here,' she went on, leading Nucingen into the adjoining room. 'you remember our bargain, my angel?'

Nucingen took out his pocket-book and counted out the hundred thousand francs, which Carlos, hidden in a cupboard, was impatiently waiting for, and which the cook handed over to him.

'Here are the hundred thousand francs our man stakes on Asie. Now we must make him lay on Europe,' said Carlos to his confidante when they were on the landing.

And he vanished after giving his instruction to the Malay, who went back into the room. She found Esther weeping bitterly. The poor girl, like a criminal con-

demned to death, had woven a romance of hope, and the fatal hour had tolled.

'My dear children,' said Asie, 'where do you mean to go?—For the Baron de Nucingen——'

Esther looked at the great banker with a start of surprise that was admirably acted.

'Ja, mein kind, I am dat Baron von Nucingen.'

'The Baron de Nucingen must not, cannot remain in such a room as this,' Asie went on. 'Listen to me; your former maid Eugénie.'

'Eugénie—from de Rue Taitbout?' cried the Baron.

'Just so; the woman placed in possession of the furniture,' replied Asie, 'and who let the apartment to that handsome Englishwoman——'

'Hah! I onderstant!' said the Baron.

'Madame's former waiting-maid,' Asie went on, respectfully alluding to Esther, 'will receive you very comfortably this evening; and the commercial police will never think of looking for her in her old rooms which she left three months ago——'

'Feerst rate, feerst rate!' cried the Baron. 'An' besides, I know dese commercial police, an' I know vat sorts shall make dem disappear."

'You will find Eugénie a sharp customer,' said Asie. 'I found her for Madame.'

'Hah! I know her!' cried the millionaire, laughing. 'She haf fleeced me of dirty tousant franc.'

Esther shuddered with horror in a way that would have led a man of any feeling to trust her with his fortune.

'Oh, dat vas mein own fault,' the Baron said. 'I vas seeking for you.'

And he related the incident that had arisen out of the letting of Esther's rooms to the Englishwoman.

'There, now, you see, Madame, Eugénie never told you all that, the sly thing!' said Asie.—'Still, Madame is used to the hussy,' she added to the Baron. 'Keep her on, all the same.'

She drew Nucingen aside and said—

'You shall hafe a fine carriage, de prettiest carriage in Paris,' said Nucingen, as they drove along. 'Everyting dat luxury shall sopply shall be for you. Not any qveen shall be more rich dan vat you shall be. You shall be respected like ein Cherman Braut. I shall hafe you to be free.—Do not veep! Listen to me—I lofe you really, truly, mit de purest lofe. Efery tear of yours breaks my heart.'

'Can one truly love a woman one has bought?' said the poor girl in the sweetest tones.

'Choseph vas solt by his broders for dat he was so comely. Dat is so in de Biple. An' in de Eastern lants men buy deir wifes.'

On arriving at the Rue Taitbout, Esther could not return to the scene of her happiness without some pain. She remained sitting on a couch, motionless, drying away her tears one by one, and never hearing a word of the crazy speeches poured out by the banker. He fell at her feet, and she let him kneel without saying a word to him, allowing him to take her hands as he would, and never thinking of the sex of the creature who was rubbing her feet to warm them; for Nucingen found that they were cold.

This scene of scalding tears shed on the Baron's head, and of ice-cold feet that he tried to warm, lasted from midnight till two in the morning.

'Eugénie,' cried the Baron at last to Europe, 'persvade your Mis'ess that she shall go to bet.'

'No!' cried Esther, starting to her feet like a scared horse. 'Never in this house!'

'Look here, Monsieur, I know Madame; she is as gentle and kind as a lamb,' said Europe to the Baron. 'Only you must not rub her the wrong way, you must get at her sideways—she had been so miserable here.—You see how worn the furniture is.—Let her go her own way.

'Furnish some pretty little house for her, very nicely. Perhaps when she sees everything new about her she

will feel a stranger there, and think you better looking than you are, and be angelically sweet.—Oh! Madame has not her match, and you may boast of having done a very good stroke of business: a good heart, genteel manners, a fine instep—and a skin, a complexion! Ah!——

'And witty enough to make a condemned wretch laugh. And Madame can feel an attachment.—And then how she can dress!—Well, if it is costly, still, as they say, you get your money's worth.—Here all the gowns were seized, everything she has is three months old.—But Madame is so kind, you see, that I love her, and she is my mistress!—But in all justice—such a woman as she is, in the midst of furniture that has been seized!—And for whom? For a young scamp who has ruined her. Poor little thing, she is not at all herself.'

'Esther, Esther; go to bet, my anchel! If it is me vat frighten you, I shall stay here on dis sofa——' cried the Baron, fired by the purest devotion, as he saw that Esther was still weeping.

'Well, then,' said Esther, taking the 'lynx's' hand, and kissing it with an impulse of gratitude which brought something very like a tear to his eye, 'I shall be grateful to you——'

And she fled into her room and locked the door.

'Dere is someting fery strange in all dat,' thought Nucingen, excited by his pillules. 'Vat shall dey say at home?'

He got up and looked out of the window. 'My carriage still is dere. It shall soon be daylight.' He walked up and down the room.

'Vat Montame de Nucingen should laugh at me ven she should know how I hafe spent dis night!'

He applied his ear to the bedroom door, thinking himself rather too much of a simpleton.

'Esther!'

No reply.

'Mein Gott! an' she is still veeping!' said he to himself, as he stretched himself on the sofa.

'If you give Eugénie five hundred francs a month, which will fill up her stocking finely, you can know everything that Madame does: make her the lady's-maid. Eugénie will be all the more devoted to you since she has already done you.—Nothing attaches a woman to a man more than the fact that she has once fleeced him. But keep a tight rein on Eugénie; she will do any earthly thing for money; she is a dreadful creature!'

'An' vat of you?'

'I,' said Asie, 'I make both ends meet.'

Nucingen, the astute financier, had a bandage over his eyes; he allowed himself to be led like a child. The sight of that spotless and adorable Esther wiping her eyes and pricking in the stitches of her embroidery as demurely as an innocent girl, revived in the amorous old man the sensations he had experienced in the Forest of Vincennes; he would have given her the key of his safe. He felt so young, his heart was so overflowing with adoration; he only waited till Asie should be gone to throw himself at the feet of this Raphael's Madonna.

This sudden blossoming of youth in the heart of a stockbroker, of an old man, is one of the social phenomena which must be left to physiology to account for. Crushed under the burthen of business, stifled under endless calculations and the incessant anxieties of million-hunting, young emotions revive with their sublime illusions, sprout and flower like a forgotten cause or a forgotten seed, whose effects, whose gorgeous bloom, are the sport of chance, brought out by a late and sudden gleam of sunshine.

The Baron, a clerk by the time he was twelve years old in the ancient house of Aldrigger at Strasbourg, had never set foot in the world of sentiment. So there he stood in front of his idol, hearing in his brain a thousand modes of speech, while none came to his lips, till at length he acted on the brutal promptings of desire that betrayed the man of sixty-six.

'Vill you come Rue Taitbout?' said he.

'Wherever you please, Monsieur,' said Esther, rising.

'Verever I please!' he echoed in rapture. 'You are ein anchel from de sky, and I lofe you more as if I was a little young man, vile I hafe grey hairs——'

'You had better say white, for they are too fine a black to be only grey,' said Asie.

'Get out, foul dealer in human flesh! You hafe got your moneys; do not slobber no more on dis flower of lofe!' cried the banker, indemnifying himself by this violent abuse for all the insolence he had submitted to.

'You old rip! I will pay you out for that speech!' said Asie, threatening the banker with a gesture worthy of the Halle, at which the Baron merely shrugged his shoulders. 'Between the lip of the pot and that of the guzzler there is often a viper, and you will find me there!' she went on, furious at Nucingen's contempt.

Millionaires, whose money is guarded by the Bank of France, whose mansions are guarded by a squad of footmen, whose person in the streets is safe behind the rampart of a coach with swift English horses, fear no ill; so the Baron looked calmly at Asie, as a man who had just given her a hundred thousand francs.

This dignity had its effect. Asie beat a retreat, growling down the stairs in highly revolutionary language; she spoke of the guillotine!

'What have you said to her?' asked the Madonna *à la broderie*, 'for she is a good soul.'

'She hafe solt you, she hafe robbed you——'

'When we are beggared,' said she, in a tone to rend the heart of a diplomate, 'who has ever any money or consideration for us?'

'Poor leetle ting!' said Nucingen. 'Do not stop here ein moment longer.'

The Baron offered her his arm; he led her away just as she was, and put her into his carriage with more respect perhaps than he would have shown to the handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.

About ten minutes after sunrise, the Baron de Nucingen, who was sleeping the uneasy slumbers that are snatched by compulsion in an awkward position on a couch, was aroused with a start by Europe from one of those dreams that visit us in such moments, and of which the swift complications are a phenomenon inexplicable by medical physiology.

'Oh, God help us, Madame!' she shrieked. 'Madame! —the soldiers—gendarmes—bailiffs! They have come to take us.'

At the moment when Esther opened her door and appeared, hurriedly wrapped in her dressing-gown, her bare feet in slippers, her hair in disorder, lovely enough to bring the angel Raphael to perdition, the drawing-room door vomited into the room a gutter of human mire that came on, on ten feet, towards the beautiful girl, who stood like an angel in some Flemish church picture. One man came foremost. Contenson, the horrible Contenson, laid his hand on Esther's dewy shoulder.

'You are Mademoiselle van——' he began. Europe, by a back-handed slap on Contenson's cheek, sent him sprawling to measure his length on the carpet, and with all the more effect because at the same time she caught his leg with the sharp kick known to those who practise the art as a *coup de savate*.

'Hands off!' cried she. 'No one shall touch my mistress.'

'She has broken my leg!' yelled Contenson, picking himself up; 'I will have damages!'

From the group of bumbailiffs, looking like what they were, all standing with their horrible hats on their yet more horrible heads, with mahogany-coloured faces and bleared eyes, damaged noses, and hideous mouths, Louchard now stepped forth, more decently dressed than his men, but keeping his hat on, his expression at once smooth-faced and smiling.

'Mademoiselle, I arrest you!' said he to Esther. 'As

for you, my girl,' he added to Europe, 'any resistance will be punished, and perfectly useless.'

The noise of muskets, let down with a thud of their stocks on the floor of the dining-room, showing that the invaders had soldiers to back them, gave emphasis to this speech.

'And what am I arrested for?' said Esther.

'What about our little debts?' said Louchard.

'To be sure,' cried Esther; 'give me leave to dress.'

'But, unfortunately, Mademoiselle, I am obliged to make sure that you have no way of getting out of your room,' said Louchard.

All this passed so quickly that the Baron had not yet had time to intervene.

'Well, and am I still a foul dealer in human flesh, Baron de Nucingen?' cried the hideous Asie, forcing her way past the sheriff's officers to the couch, where she pretended to have just discovered the banker.

'Contemptible wretch!' exclaimed Nucingen, drawing himself up in financial majesty.

He placed himself between Esther and Louchard, who took off his hat as Contenson cried out, 'Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen.'

At a signal from Louchard the bailiffs vanished from the room, respectfully taking their hats off. Contenson alone was left.

'Do you propose to pay, Monsieur le Baron?' asked he, hat in hand.

'I shall pay,' said the banker; 'but I must know vat dis is all about.'

'Three hundred and twelve thousand francs and some centimes, costs paid; but the charges for the arrest not included.'

'Three hundred thousand francs,' cried the Baron; 'dat is a fery 'xpensive vaking for a man vat has passed de night on a sofa,' he added in Europe's ear.

'Is that man really the Baron de Nucingen?' said

Europe to Louchard, giving weight to the doubt by a gesture which Mademoiselle Dupont, the low comedy servant of the Français, might have envied.

'Yes, Mademoiselle,' said Louchard.

'Yes,' replied Contenson.

'I shall be answerable,' said the Baron, piqued in his honour by Europe's doubt. 'You shall 'llow me to say ein vort to her.'

Esther and her elderly lover retired to the bedroom, Louchard finding it necessary to apply his ear to the keyhole.

'I lofe you more as my life, Esther; but vy gife to your creditors moneys vich shall be so much better in your pocket? Go into prison. I shall ondertake to buy up dose hundert tousant crowns for ein hundert tousant francs, an' so you shall hafe two hundert tousant francs for you——'

'That scheme is perfectly useless,' cried Louchard through the door. 'The creditor is not in love with Mademoiselle—not he! You understand? And he means to have more than all, now he knows that you are in love with her.'

'You dam' sneak!' cried Nucingen, opening the door, and dragging Louchard into the bedroom; 'you know not dat vat you talk about. I shall gife you, you'self, tventy per cent. if you make the job.'

'Impossible, M. le Baron.'

'What, Monsieur, you could have the heart to let my mistress go to prison?' said Europe, intervening. 'But take my wages, my savings; take them, Madame; I have forty thousand francs——'

'Ah, my good girl, I did not really know you!' cried Esther, clasping Europe in her arms.

Europe proceeded to melt into tears.

'I shall pay,' said the Baron piteously, as he drew out a pocket-book, from which he took one of the little printed forms which the Bank of France issues to

bankers, on which they have only to write a sum in figures and in words to make them available as cheques to bearer.

'It is not worth the trouble, Monsieur le Baron,' said Louchard; 'I have instructions not to accept payment in anything but coin of the realm—gold or silver. As it is you, I will take banknotes.'

'Der Teufel!' cried the Baron. 'Well, show me your papers.'

Contenson handed him three packets covered with blue paper, which the Baron took, looking at the man, and adding in an undertone—

'It should hafe been a better day's vork for you ven you had gife me notice.'

'Why, how should I know you were here, Monsieur le Baron?' replied the spy, heedless whether Louchard heard him. 'You lost my services by withdrawing your confidence. You are done,' added this philosopher, shrugging his shoulders.

'Qvite true,' said the Baron. 'Ah, my chilt,' he exclaimed, seeing the bills of exchange, and turning to Esther, 'you are de fictim of a torough scoundrel, ein highway tief!'

'Alas, yes,' said poor Esther; 'but he loved me truly.'

'Ven I should hafe known—I should hafe made you to protest——'

'You are off your head, Monsieur le Baron,' said Louchard; 'there is a third endorsement.'

'Yes, dere is a tird endorsement—Cérizet! A man of de opposition.'

'Will you write an order on your cashier, Monsieur le Baron?' said Louchard. 'I will send Contenson to him and dismiss my men. It is getting late, and every body will know that——'

'Go den, Contenson,' said Nucingen. 'My cashier lives at de corner of Rue des Mathurins and Rue de l'Arcate. Here is ein vort for dat he shall go to du

Tillet or to de Kellers, in case ve shall not hafe a hundert tousant francs—for our cash shall be all at de Bank.—Get dress', my anchel,' he said to Esther. 'You are at liberty.—An' old vomans,' he went on, looking at Asie, 'are more dangerous as young vomans.'

'I will go and give the creditor a good laugh,' said Asie, 'and he will give me something for a treat to-day.—We bear no malice, Monsieur le Baron,' added Sainte-Estève with a horrible curtsey.

Louchard took the bills out of the Baron's hands, and remained alone with him in the drawing-room, whither, half an hour later, the cashier came, followed by Contenson. Esther then reappeared in a bewitching, though improvised, costume. When the money had been counted by Louchard, the Baron wished to examine the bills; but Esther snatched them with a cat-like grab, and carried them away to her desk.

'What will you give the rabble?' said Contenson to Nucingen.

'You hafe not shown much consideration,' said the Baron.

'And what about my leg?' cried Contenson.

'Louchart, you shall gife ein hundert francs to Contenson out of the change of the tousand-francs note.'

'De lady is a beauty,' said the cashier to the Baron, as they left the Rue Taitbout, 'but she is costing you ver' dear, Monsieur le Baron.'

'Keep my segret,' said the Baron, who had said the same to Contenson and Louchard.

Louchard went away with Contenson; but on the boulevard Asie, who was looking out for him, stopped Louchard.

'The bailiff and the creditor are there in a cab,' said she. 'They are thirsty, and there is money going.'

While Louchard counted out the cash, Contenson studied the customers. He recognised Carlos by his eyes, and traced the form of his forehead under the wig.

This wig he shrewdly regarded as suspicious; he took the number of the cab while seeming quite indifferent to what was going on; Asie and Europe puzzled him beyond measure. He thought that the Baron was the victim of excessively clever sharpers, all the more so because Louchard, when securing his services, had been singularly close. And besides, the twist of Europe's foot had not struck his shin only.

'A trick like that is learned at Saint-Lazare,' he had reflected as he got up.

Carlos dismissed the bailiff, paying him liberally, and as he did so, said to the driver of the cab, 'To the Perron, Palais Royal.'

'The rascal!' thought Contenson as he heard the order. 'There is something up!' Carlos drove to the Palais Royal at a pace which precluded all fear of pursuit. He made his way in his own fashion through the arcades, took another cab on the Place du Château d'Eau, and bid the man go 'to the Passage de l'Opéra, the end by the Rue Pinon.'

A quarter of an hour later he was in the Rue Taitbout. On seeing him, Esther said—

'Here are the fatal papers.'

Carlos took the bills, examined them, and then burnt them in the kitchen fire.

'We have done the trick,' he said, showing her three hundred and ten thousand francs in a roll, which he took out of the pocket of his coat. 'This, and the hundred thousand francs squeezed out by Asie, set us free to act.'

'Oh God, oh God!' cried poor Esther.

'But, you idiot,' said the ferocious swindler, 'you have only to be ostensibly Nucingen's mistress, and you can always see Lucien; he is Nucingen's friend; I do not forbid your being madly in love with him.'

Esther saw a glimmer of light in her darkened life; she breathed once more.

'Europe, my girl,' said Carlos, leading the creature

into a corner of the boudoir where no one could overhear a word, 'Europe, I am pleased with you.'

Europe held up her head, and looked at this man with an expression which so completely changed her faded features, that Asie, witnessing the interview, as she watched her from the door, wondered whether the interest by which Carlos held Europe might not perhaps be even stronger than that by which she herself was bound to him.

'That is not all, my child. Four hundred thousand francs are a mere nothing to me. Paccard will give you an account for some plate, amounting to thirty thousand francs, on which money has been paid on account; but our goldsmith, Biddin, has paid money for us. Our furniture, seized by him, will no doubt be advertised to-morrow. Go and see Biddin; he lives in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec; he will give you Mont-de-Piété tickets for ten thousand francs. You understand, Esther ordered the plate; she has not paid for it, and she put it up the spout. She will be in danger of a little summons for swindling. So we must pay the goldsmith the thirty thousand francs, and pay up ten thousand francs to the Mont-de-Piété to get the plate back. Forty-three thousand francs in all, including the costs. The silver is very much alloyed; the Baron will give her a new service, and we shall bone a few thousand francs out of that. You owe—what? two years' account with the dressmaker?'

'Put it at six thousand francs,' replied Europe.

'Well, if Madame Auguste wants to be paid and keep our custom, tell her to make out a bill for thirty thousand francs over four years. Make a similar arrangement with the milliner. The jeweller, Samuel Frisch the Jew, in the Rue Sainte-Avoie, will lend you some pawn-tickets; we must owe him twenty-five thousand francs, and we must want six thousand for jewels pledged at the Mont-de-Piété. We will return the trinkets to

the jeweller, half the stones will be imitation, but the Baron will not examine them. In short, you will make him fork out another hundred and fifty thousand francs to add to our nest-eggs within a week.'

'Madame might give me a little help,' said Europe. 'Tell her so, for she sits there mumchance, and obliges me to find more inventions than three authors for one piece.'

'If Esther turns prudish, just let me know,' said Carlos. 'Nucingen must give her a carriage and horses; she will have to choose and buy everything herself. Go to the horse-dealer and the coachmaker who are employed by the job-master where Paccard finds work. We shall get handsome horses, very dear, which will go lame within a month, and we shall have to change them.'

'We might get six thousand francs out of a perfumer's bill,' said Europe.

'Oh!' said he, shaking his head, 'we must go gently. Nucingen has only got his arm into the press; we must have his head. Besides all this, I must get five hundred thousand francs.'

'You can get them,' replied Europe. 'Madame will soften towards the fat fool for about six hundred thousand, and insist on four hundred thousand more to love him truly!'

'Listen to me, my child,' said Carlos. 'The day when I get the last hundred thousand francs, there shall be twenty thousand for you.'

'What good will they do me?' said Europe, letting her arms drop like a woman to whom life seems impossible.

'You could go back to Valenciennes, buy a good business, and set up as an honest woman if you chose; there are many tastes in human nature. Paccard thinks of settling sometimes; he has no encumbrances on his hands, and not much on his conscience; you might suit each other,' replied Carlos.

'Go back to Valenciennes! What are you thinking of, Monsieur?' cried Europe in alarm.

Europe, who was born at Valenciennes, the child of very poor parents, had been sent at seven years of age to a spinning factory, where the demands of modern industry had impaired her physical strength, just as vice had untimely depraved her. Corrupted at the age of twelve, and a mother at thirteen, she found herself bound to the most degraded of human creatures. On the occasion of a murder case, she had been called as a witness before the Court. Haunted at sixteen by a remnant of rectitude, and the terror inspired by the law, her evidence led to the prisoner being sentenced to twenty years of hard labour.

The convict, one of those men who have been in the hands of justice more than once, and whose temper is apt at terrible revenge, had said to the girl in open court—

'In ten years, as sure as you live, Prudence' (Europe's name was Prudence Servien), 'I will return to be the death of you, if I am scragged for it.'

The President of the Court tried to reassure the girl by promising her the protection and the care of the law; but the poor child was so terror-stricken that she fell ill, and was in hospital nearly a year. Justice is an abstract being, represented by a collection of individuals who are incessantly changing, whose good intentions and memories are, like themselves, liable to many vicissitudes. Courts and tribunals can do nothing to hinder crimes; their business is to deal with them when done. From this point of view, a preventive police would be a boon to a country; but the mere word Police is in these days a bugbear to legislators, who no longer can distinguish between the three words—Government, Administration, and Law-making. The legislator tends to centralise everything in the State, as if the State could act.

The convict would be sure always to remember his victim, and to avenge himself when Justice had ceased to think of either of them.

Prudence, who instinctively appreciated the danger—in a general sense, so to speak—left Valenciennes and came to Paris at the age of seventeen to hide there. She tried four trades, of which the most successful was that of a 'super' at a minor theatre. She was picked up by Paccard, and to him she told her woes. Paccard, Jacques Collin's disciple and right-hand man, spoke of this girl to his master, and when the master needed a slave he said to Prudence—

'If you will serve me as the devil must be served, I will rid you of Durut.'

Durut was the convict; the Damocles' sword hung over Prudence Servien's head.

But for these details, many critics would have thought Europe's attachment somewhat grotesque. And no one could have understood the startling announcement that Carlos had ready.

'Yes, my girl, you can go back to Valenciennes. Here, read this.'

And he held out to her yesterday's paper, pointing to this paragraph—

'Toulon.—Yesterday, Jean François Durut was executed here. Early in the morning the garrison,' etc.

Prudence dropped the paper; her legs gave way under the weight of her body; she lived again; for, to use her own words, she never liked the taste of her food since the day when Durut had threatened her.

'You see, I have kept my word. It has taken four years to bring Durut to the scaffold by leading him into a snare.—Well, finish my job here, and you will find yourself at the head of a little country business in your native town, with twenty thousand francs of your own,

as Paccard's wife, and I will allow him to be virtuous as a form of pension.'

Europe picked up the paper and read with greedy eyes all the details, of which for twenty years the papers have never been tired, as to the death of convicted criminals: the impressive scene, the chaplain—who has always converted the victim—the hardened criminal preaching to his fellow convicts, the battery of guns, the convicts on their knees; and then the twaddle and reflections which never lead to any change in the management of the prisons where eighteen hundred crimes are herded.

'We must place Asie on the staff once more,' said Carlos.

Asie came forward, not understanding Europe's pantomime.

'In bringing her back here as cook, you must begin by giving the Baron such a dinner as he never ate in his life,' he went on. 'Tell him that Asie has lost all her money at play, and has taken service once more. We shall not need an outdoor servant. Paccard shall be coachman. Coachmen do not leave their box, where they are safe out of the way; and he will run less risk from spies. Madame must turn him out in a powdered wig and a braided felt cocked hat; that will alter his appearance. Besides, I will make him up.'

'Are we going to have men-servants in the house?' asked Asie with a leer.

'All honest folks,' said Carlos.

'All soft-heads,' retorted the mulatto.

'If the Baron takes a house, Paccard has a friend who will suit as the lodge porter,' said Carlos. 'Then we shall only need a footman and a kitchen-maid, and you can surely keep an eye on the two strangers——'

As Carlos was leaving, Paccard made his appearance.

'Wait a little while, there are people in the street,' said the man.

This simple statement was alarming. Carlos went

up to Europe's room, and stayed there till Paccard came to fetch him, having called a hackney cab that came into the courtyard. Carlos pulled down the blinds, and was driven off at a pace that defied pursuit.

Having reached the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, he got out at a short distance from a hackney coach stand, to which he went on foot, and thence returned to the Quai Malaquais, escaping all inquiry.

'Here, child,' said he to Lucien, showing him four hundred bank-notes for a thousand francs, 'here is something on account for the purchase of the estates of Rubempré. We will risk a hundred thousand. Omnibuses have just been started; the Parisians will take to the novelty; in three months we shall have treble our capital. I know the concern; they will pay splendid dividends taken out of the capital, to put a head on the shares—an old idea of Nucingen's revived. If we acquire the Rubempré land, we shall not have to pay on the nail.

'You must go and see des Lupeaulx, and beg him to give you a personal recommendation to a lawyer named Desroches, a cunning dog, whom you must call on at his office. Get him to go to Rubempré and see how the land lies; promise him a premium of twenty thousand francs if he manages to secure you thirty thousand francs a year by investing eight hundred thousand francs in land round about the ruins of the old house.'

'How you go on—on! on!'

'I am always going on. This is no time for joking.—You must then invest a hundred thousand crowns in Treasury bonds, so as to lose no interest; you may safely leave it to Desroches, he is as honest as he is knowing.—That being done, get off to Angoulême, and persuade your sister and your brother-in-law to pledge themselves to a little fib in the way of business. Your relations are to have given you six hundred thousand

francs to promote your marriage with Clotilde de Grandlieu; there is no disgrace in that.'

'We are saved!' cried Lucien, dazzled.

'You are, yes!' replied Carlos. 'But even you are not safe till you walk out of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with Clotilde as your wife.'

'And what have you to fear?' said Lucien, apparently much concerned for his counsellor.

'Some inquisitive souls are on my track—I must assume the manners of a genuine priest; it is most annoying. The Devil will cease to protect me if he sees me with a breviary under my arm.'

At this moment the Baron de Nucingen, who was leaning on his cashier's arm, reached the door of his mansion.

'I am ver' much afrait,' said he, as he went in, 'dat I hafe done a bat day's vork. Vell, we must make it up some oder vays.'

'De misfortune is dat you shall hafe been caught, mein Herr Baron,' said the worthy German, whose whole care was for appearances.

'Ja, my miss'ess *en titre* should be in a position vordy of me,' said this Louis XIV. of the counting-house.

Feeling sure that sooner or later Esther would be his, the Baron was now himself again, a masterly financier. He resumed the management of his affairs, and with such effect that his cashier, finding him in his office room at six o'clock next morning, verifying his securities, rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

'Ah, ha! mein Herr Baron, you shall hafe saved money last night!' said he, with a half-cunning, half-loutish German grin.

Though men who are as rich as the Baron de Nucingen have more opportunities than others for losing money, they also have more chances of making it, even when they indulge their follies. Though the financial policy

of the house of Nucingen has been explained elsewhere, it may be as well to point out that such immense fortunes are not made, are not built up, are not increased, and are not retained in the midst of the commercial, political, and industrial revolutions of the present day but at the cost of immense losses, or, if you choose to view it so, of heavy taxes on private fortunes. Very little newly-created wealth is thrown into the common treasury of the world. Every fresh accumulation represents some new inequality in the general distribution of wealth. What the State exacts it makes some return for; but what a house like that of Nucingen takes, it keeps.

Such covert robbery escapes the law for the reason which would have made a Jacques Collin of Frederick the Great, if, instead of dealing with provinces by means of battles, he had dealt in smuggled goods or transferable securities. The high politics of money-making consist in forcing the States of Europe to issue loans at twenty or at ten per cent., in making that twenty or ten per cent. by the use of public funds, in squeezing industry on a vast scale by buying up raw materials, in throwing a rope to the first founder of a business just to keep him above water till his drowned-out enterprise is safely landed—in short, in all the great battles for money-getting.

The banker, no doubt, like the conqueror, runs risks; but there are so few men in a position to wage this warfare, that the sheep have no business to meddle. Such grand struggles are between the shepherds. Thus, as the defaulters are guilty of having wanted to win too much, very little sympathy is felt as a rule for the misfortunes brought about by the coalition of the Nucingens. If a speculator blows his brains out, if a stockbroker bolts, if a lawyer makes off with the fortune of a hundred families—which is far worse than killing a man—if a banker is insolvent, all these catastrophes are forgotten in Paris in a few months, and buried under the oceanic surges of the great city.

The colossal fortunes of Jacques Cœur, of the Medici, of the Angos of Dieppe, of the Auffredis of la Rochelle, of the Fuggers, of the Tiepolos, of the Corners, were honestly made long ago by the advantages they had over the ignorance of the people as to the sources of precious products; but nowadays geographical information has reached the masses, and competition has so effectually limited the profits, that every rapidly made fortune is the result of chance, or of a discovery, or of some legalised robbery. The lower grades of mercantile enterprise have retorted on the perfidious dealings of higher commerce, especially during the last ten years, by base adulteration of the raw material. Wherever chemistry is practised, wine is no longer procurable; the vine industry is consequently waning. Manufactured salt is sold to avoid the excise. The tribunals are appalled by this universal dishonesty. In short, French trade is regarded with suspicion by the whole world, and England too is fast being demoralised.

With us the mischief has its origin in the political situation. The Charter proclaimed the reign of Money, and success has become the supreme consideration of an atheistic age. And, indeed, the corruption of the higher ranks is infinitely more hideous, in spite of the dazzling display and specious arguments of wealth, than that ignoble and more personal corruption of the inferior classes, of which certain details lend a comic element—terrible, if you will—to this drama. The Government, always alarmed by a new idea, has banished these materials of modern comedy from the stage. The citizen class, less liberal than Louis XIV., dreads the advent of its *Mariage de Figaro*, forbids the appearance of a political *Tartuffe*, and certainly would not allow *Turcaret* to be represented, for Turcaret is king. Consequently, comedy has to be narrated, and a book is now the weapon—less swift, but no more sure—that writers wield.

In the course of this morning, amid the coming and

going of callers, orders to be given, and brief interviews, making Nucingen's private office a sort of financial lobby, one of his stockbrokers announced to him the disappearance of a member of the Company, one of the richest and cleverest too—Jacques Falleix, brother of Martin Falleix, and the successor of Jules Desmarets. Jacques Falleix was stockbroker in ordinary to the house of Nucingen. In concert with du Tillet and the Kellers, the Baron had plotted the ruin of this man in cold blood, as if it had been the killing of a Passover lamb.

'He could not hafe helt on,' replied the Baron quietly.

Jacques Falleix had done them immense service in stock-jobbing. During a crisis a few months since he had saved the situation by acting boldly. But to look for gratitude from a money-dealer is as vain as to try to touch the heart of the wolves of the Ukraine in winter.

'Poor fellow!' said the stockbroker. 'He so little anticipated such a catastrophe, that he had furnished a little house for his mistress in the Rue Saint-Georges; he has spent a hundred and fifty thousand francs in decorations and furniture. He was so devoted to Madame du Val-Noble! The poor woman must give it all up. And nothing is paid for.'

'Goot, goot!' thought Nucingen, 'dis is de very chance to make up for vat I hafe lost dis night!—He hafe paid for noting?' he asked his informant.

'Why,' said the stockbroker, 'where would you find a tradesman so ill informed as to refuse credit to Jacques Falleix? There is a splendid cellar of wine, it would seem. By the way, the house is for sale; he meant to buy it. The lease is in his name.—What a piece of folly! Plate, furniture, wine, carriage-horses, everything will be valued in a lump, and what will the creditors get out of it?'

'Come again to-morrow,' said Nucingen. 'I shall

hafe seen all dat; and if it is not a declared bankruptcy, if tings can be arranged and compromised, I shall tell you to offer some reasonaple price for dat furniture, if I shall buy de lease——'

'That can be managed,' said his friend. 'If you go there this morning, you will find one of Falleix's partners there with the tradespeople, who want to establish a first claim; but la Val-Noble has their accounts made out to Falleix.'

The Baron sent off one of his clerks forthwith to his lawyer. Jacques Falleix had spoken to him about this house, which was worth sixty thousand francs at most, and he wished to be put in possession of it at once, so as to avail himself of the privileges of the householder.

The cashier, honest man, came to inquire whether his master had lost anything by Falleix's bankruptcy.

'On de contrar', mein goot Volfgang, I stant to vin ein hundert tousant francs.'

'How vas dat?'

'Vell, I shall hafe de little house vat dat poor Teufel Falleix should furnish for his mis'ess this year. I shall hafe all dat for fifty tousant franc to de creditors; and my notary, Maître Cardot, shall hafe my orders to buy de house, for de lan'lord vant de money—I knew dat, but I hat lost mein head. Ver' soon my difine Esther shall life in a little palace. . . . I hafe been dere mit Falleix—it is close to here.—It shall fit me like a glofe.'

Falleix's failure required the Baron's presence at the Bourse; but he could not bear to leave his house in the Rue Saint-Lazare without going to the Rue Taitbout; he was already miserable at having been away from Esther for so many hours. He would have liked to keep her at his elbow. The profits he hoped to make out of his stockbrokers' plunder made the former loss of four hundred thousand francs quite easy to endure.

Delighted to announce to his 'anchel' that she was to move from the Rue Taitbout to the Rue Saint-Georges,

where she was to have 'ein little palace' where her memories would no longer rise up in antagonism to their happiness, the pavement felt elastic under his feet; he walked like a young man in a young man's dream. As he turned the corner of the Rue des Trois Frères, in the middle of his dream, and of the road, the Baron beheld Europe coming towards him, looking very much upset.

'Vere shall you go?' he asked.

'Well, Monsieur, I was on my way to you. You were quite right yesterday. I see now that poor Madame had better have gone to prison for a few days. But how should women understand money matters? When Madame's creditors heard that she had come home, they all came down upon us like birds of prey.—Last evening, at seven o'clock, Monsieur, men came and stuck horrible posters up to announce a sale of furniture on Saturday—but that is nothing.—Madame, who is all heart, once upon a time to oblige that wretch of a man you know——'

'Vat wretch?'

'Well, the man she was in love with, d'Estourny—well, he was charming! He was only a gambler——'

'He gambled with bevelled cards!'

'Well—and what do you do at the Bourse?' said Europe. 'But let me go on. One day, to hinder Georges, as he said, from blowing out his brains, she pawned all her plate and her jewels, which had never been paid for. Now on hearing that she had given something to one of her creditors, they came in a body and made a scene. They threaten her with the police-court—your angel at that bar! Is it not enough to make a wig stand on end? She is bathed in tears; she talks of throwing herself into the river—and she will do it.'

'If I shall go to see her, dat is goot-bye to de Bourse; an' it is impossible but I shall go, for I shall make some money for her—you shall compose her. I shall pay her

debts; I shall go to see her at four o'clock. But tell me, Eugénie, dat she shall lofe me a little——'

'A little?—A great deal!—I tell you what, Monsieur, nothing but generosity can win a woman's heart. You would, no doubt, have saved a hundred thousand francs or so by letting her go to prison. Well, you would never have won her heart. As she said to me—"Eugénie, he has been noble, grand—he has a great soul."'

'She hafe said dat, Eugénie?' cried the Baron.

'Yes, Monsieur, to me, myself.'

'Here—take dis ten louis.'

'Thank you.—But she is crying at this moment; she has been crying ever since yesterday as much as a weeping Magdalen could have cried in six months. The woman you love is in despair, and for debts that are not even hers! Oh! men—they devour women as women devour old fogies—there!'

'Dey all is de same!—She hafe pledge' herself.—Vy, no one shall ever pledge herself.—Tell her dat she shall sign noting more.—I shall pay; but if she shall sign something more—I——'

'What will you do?' said Europe with an air.

'Mein Gott! I hafe no power over her.—I shall take de management of her little affairs——Dere, dere, go to comfort her, and you shall say that in ein mont she shall live in a little palace.'

'You have invested heavily, Monsieur le Baron, and for large interest, in a woman's heart. I tell you—you look to me younger. I am but a waiting-maid, but I have often seen such a change. It is happiness—happiness gives a certain glow. . . . If you have spent a little money, do not let that worry you; you will see what a good return it will bring. And I said to Madame, I told her she would be the lowest of the low, a perfect hussy, if she did not love you, for you have picked her out of hell.—When once she has nothing on her mind, you will see. Between you and me, I may tell you, that

night when she cried so much—What is to be said, we value the esteem of the man who maintains us—and she did not dare tell you everything. She wanted to fly.'

'To fly!' cried the Baron, in dismay at the notion. 'But the Bourse, the Bourse!—Go 'vay, I shall not come in.—But tell her that I shall see her at her vindow—dat shall gife me courage!'

Esther smiled at Monsieur de Nucingen as he passed the house, and he went ponderously on his way, saying—

'She is ein anchel!'

This was how Europe had succeeded in achieving the impossible. At about half-past two Esther had finished dressing, as she was wont to dress when she expected Lucien; she was looking charming. Seeing this, Prudence, looking out of the window, said, 'There is Monsieur!'

The poor creature flew to the window, thinking she should see Lucien; she saw Nucingen.

'Oh! how cruelly you hurt me!' she said.

'There was no other way of getting you to seem to be gracious to a poor old man, who, after all, is going to pay your debts,' said Europe. 'For they are all to be paid.'

'What debts?' said the girl, who only cared to preserve her love, which dreadful hands were scattering to the winds.

'Those which Monsieur Carlos made in your name.'

'Why, here are nearly four hundred and fifty thousand francs,' cried Esther.

'And you owe a hundred and fifty thousand more. But the Baron took it all very well.—He is going to remove you from hence, and place you in a little palace.—On my honour, you are not so badly off. In your place, as you have got on the right side of this man, as soon as Carlos is satisfied, I should make him give me a house and a settled income. You are certainly the handsomest woman I ever saw, Madame, and the most attractive, but we so soon grow ugly! I was fresh and

good-looking, and look at me ! I am twenty-three, about the same age as Madame, and I look ten years older. An illness is enough.—Well, but when you have a house in Paris and investments, you need never be afraid of ending in the streets.'

Esther had ceased to listen to Europe-Eugénie-Prudence Servien. The will of a man gifted with the genius of corruption had thrown Esther back into the mud with as much force as he had used to drag her out of it.

Those who know love in its infinitude know that those who do not accept its virtues do not experience its pleasures. Since the scene in the den in the Rue de Langlade, Esther had utterly forgotten her former existence. She had since lived very virtuously, cloistered by her passion. Hence, to avoid any obstacle, the skilful fiend had been clever enough to lay such a train that the poor girl, prompted by her devotion, had merely to utter her consent to swindling actions already done, or on the point of accomplishment. This subtlety, revealing the mastery of the tempter, also characterised the methods by which he had subjugated Lucien. He created a terrible situation, dug a mine, filled it with powder, and at the critical moment said to his accomplice, 'You have only to nod, and the whole will explode !'

Esther of old, knowing only the morality peculiar to courtesans, thought all these attentions so natural, that she measured her rivals only by what they could get men to spend on them. Ruined fortunes are the conduct-stripes of these creatures. Carlos, in counting on Esther's memory, had not calculated wrongly.

These tricks of warfare, these stratagems employed a thousand times, not only by these women, but by spendthrifts too, did not disturb Esther's mind. She felt nothing but her personal degradation ; she loved Lucien, she was to be the Baron de Nucingen's mistress 'by

appointment'; this was all she thought of. The supposed Spaniard might absorb the earnest-money, Lucien might build up his fortune with the stones of her tomb, a single night of pleasure might cost the old banker so many thousand-franc notes more or less, Europe might extract a few hundred thousand francs by more or less ingenious trickery,—none of these things troubled the enamoured girl; this alone was the canker that ate into her heart. For five years she had looked upon herself as being as white as an angel. She loved, she was happy, she had never committed the smallest infidelity. This beautiful pure love was now to be defiled.

There was, in her mind, no conscious contrasting of her happy isolated past and her foul future life. It was neither interest nor sentiment that moved her, only an indefinable and all-powerful feeling that she had been white and was now black, pure and was now impure, noble and was now ignoble. Desiring to be the ermine, moral taint seemed to her unendurable. And when the Baron's passion had threatened her, she had really thought of throwing herself out of the window. In short, she loved Lucien wholly, and as women very rarely love a man. Women who say they love, who often think they love best, dance, waltz, and flirt with other men, dress for the world, and look for a harvest of concupiscent glances; but Esther, without any sacrifice, had achieved miracles of true love. She had loved Lucien for six years as actresses love and courtesans—women who, having rolled in mire and impurity, thirst for something noble, for the self-devotion of true love, and who practise exclusiveness—the only word for an idea so little known in real life.

Vanished nations, Greece, Rome, and the East, have at all times kept women shut up; the woman who loves should shut herself up. So it may easily be imagined that on quitting the palace of her fancy, where this poem

had been enacted, to go to this old man's 'little palace,' Esther felt heartsick. Urged by an iron hand, she had found herself waist-deep in disgrace before she had time to reflect; but for the past two days she had been reflecting, and felt a mortal chill about her heart.

At the words, 'End in the street,' she started to her feet and said—

'In the street!—No, in the Seine rather.'

'In the Seine? And what about Monsieur Lucien?' said Europe.

This single word brought Esther to her seat again; she remained in her armchair, her eyes fixed on a rosette in the carpet, the fire in her brain drying up her tears.

At four o'clock Nucingen found his angel lost in that sea of meditations and resolutions whereon a woman's spirit floats, and whence she emerges with utterances that are incomprehensible to those who have not sailed it in her convoy.

'Clear your brow, meine Schöne,' said the Baron, sitting down by her. 'You shall hafe no more debts—I shall arrange mit Eugénie, an' in ein mont you shall go 'vay from dese rooms and go to dat little palace.—Vas a pretty hant.—Gife it me dat I shall kiss it.' Esther gave him her hand as a dog gives a paw. 'Ach, ja! You shall gife de hant, but not de heart, and it is dat heart I lofe!'

The words were spoken with such sincerity of accent, that poor Esther looked at the old man with a compassion in her eyes that almost maddened him. Lovers, like martyrs, feel a brotherhood in their sufferings! Nothing in the world gives such a sense of kindred as community of sorrow.

'Poor man!' said she, 'he really loves.'

As he heard the words, misunderstanding their meaning, the Baron turned pale, the blood tingled in his veins, he breathed the airs of heaven. At his age a millionaire,

for such a sensation, will pay as much gold as a woman can ask.

'I lofe you like vat I lofe my daughter,' said he. 'An' I feel dere'—and he laid her hand over his heart—'dat I shall not bear to see you anyting but happy.'

'If you would only be a father to me, I would love you very much; I would never leave you; and you would see that I am not a bad woman, not grasping or greedy, as I must seem to you now——'

'You hafe done some little follies,' said the Baron, 'like all dose pretty vomen—dat is all. Say no more about dat. It is our pusiness to make money for you. Be happy! I shall be your fater for some days yet, for I know I must make you accustom' to my old carcase.'

'Really!' she exclaimed, springing on to Nucingen's knees, and clinging to him with her arm round his neck.

'Really!' repeated he, trying to force a smile.

She kissed his forehead; she believed in an impossible combination—she might remain untouched and see Lucien.

She was so coaxing to the banker that she was La Torpille once more. She fairly bewitched the old man, who promised to be a father to her for forty days. Those forty days were to be employed in acquiring and arranging the house in the Rue Saint-Georges.

When he was in the street again, as he went home, the Baron said to himself, 'I am an old flat.'

But though in Esther's presence he was a mere child, away from her he resumed his lynx's skin; just as the gambler (in *le Joueur*) becomes affectionate to Angélique when he has not a liard.

'A half a million francs I hafe paid, and I hafe not yet seen vat her leg is like.—Dat is too silly! but, happily, nobody shall hafe known it!' said he to himself three weeks after.

And he made great resolutions to come to the point with the woman who had cost him so dear ; then, in Esther's presence once more, he spent all the time he could spare her in making up for the roughness of his first words.

'After all,' said he, at the end of a month, 'I cannot be de fater eternal !'

Towards the end of the month of December 1829, just before installing Esther in the house in the Rue Saint-Georges, the Baron begged du Tillet to take Florine there, that she might see whether everything was suitable to Nucingen's fortune, and if the description of 'a little palace' were duly realised by the artists commissioned to make the cage worthy of the bird.

Every device known to luxury before the Revolution of 1830 made this residence a masterpiece of taste. Grindot the architect considered it his greatest achievement as a decorator. The staircase, which had been reconstructed of marble, the judicious use of stucco ornament, textiles, and gilding, the smallest details as much as the general effect, outdid everything of the kind left in Paris from the time of Louis xv.

'This is my dream !—This and virtue !' said Florine with a smile. 'And for whom are you spending all this money ?' she asked Nucingen. 'A virgin sent down from heaven ?'

'For a voman vat is going up there,' replied the Baron.

'A way of playing Jupiter ?' replied the actress. 'And when is she on show ?'

'On the day of the housewarming,' cried du Tillet.

'Not before dat,' said the Baron.

'My word, how we must lace and brush and fig ourselves out,' Florine went on. 'What a dance the women will lead their dressmakers and hairdressers for that evening's fun !—And when is it to be ?'

'Dat is not for me to say.'

'What a woman she must be!' cried Florine. 'How much I should like to see her!'

'An' so should I,' answered the Baron artlessly.

'What! is everything new together—the house, the furniture, and the woman?'

'Even the banker,' said du Tillet, 'for my old friend seems to me quite young again.'

'Well, he must go back to his twentieth year,' said Florine; 'at any rate, for once.'

In the early days of 1830 everybody in Paris was talking of Nucingen's passion and the outrageous splendour of his house. The poor Baron, pointed at, laughed at, and fuming with rage, as may easily be imagined, took it into his head that on the occasion of giving the housewarming he would at the same time get rid of his paternal disguise, and get the price of so much generosity. Always circumvented by 'La Torpille,' he determined to treat of their union by correspondence, so as to win from her an autograph promise. Bankers have no faith in anything less than a promissory note.

So one morning early in the year he rose early, locked himself into his room, and composed the following letter in very good French; for though he spoke the language very badly, he could write it very well:—

'DEAR ESTHER, the flower of my thoughts and the only joy of my life, when I told you that I loved you as I love my daughter, I deceived you, I deceived myself. I only wished to express the holiness of my sentiments, which are unlike those felt by other men, in the first place, because I am an old man, and also because I have never loved till now. I love you so much, that if you cost me my fortune I should not love you the less.

'Be just! Most men would not, like me, have seen the angel in you; I have never even glanced at your past. I love you both as I love my daughter Augusta, and as I might love my wife, if my wife could have loved

me. Since the only excuse for an old man's love is that he should be happy, ask yourself if I am not playing a too ridiculous part. I have taken you to be the consolation and joy of my declining days. You know that till I die you will be as happy as a woman can be; and you know, too, that after my death you will be rich enough to be the envy of many women. In every stroke of business I have effected since I have had the happiness of your acquaintance, your share is set apart, and you have a standing account with Nucingen's bank. In a few days you will move into a house which, sooner or later, will be your own if you like it. Now, plainly, will you still receive me then as a father, or will you make me happy?

'Forgive me for writing so frankly, but when I am with you I lose all courage; I feel too keenly that you are indeed my mistress. I have no wish to hurt you; I only want to tell you how much I suffer, and how hard it is to wait at my age, when every day takes with it some hopes and some pleasures. Besides, the delicacy of my conduct is a guarantee of the sincerity of my intentions. Have I ever behaved as your creditor? You are like a citadel, and I am not a young man. In answer to my appeals, you say your life is at stake, and when I hear you, you make me believe it; but here I sink into dark melancholy and doubts dishonourable to us both. You seemed to me as sweet and innocent as you are lovely; but you insist on destroying my convictions. Ask yourself!—You tell me you bear a passion in your heart, an indomitable passion, but you refuse to tell me the name of the man you love.—Is this natural?

'You have turned a fairly strong man into an incredibly weak one. You see what I have come to; I am induced to ask you at the end of five months what future hope there is for my passion. Again, I must know what part I am to play at the opening of your house. Money is nothing to me when it is spent for you; I will

not be so absurd as to make a merit to you of this contempt; but though my love knows no limits, my fortune is limited, and I care for it only for your sake. Well, if by giving you everything I possess I might, as a poor man, win your affection, I would rather be poor and loved than rich and scorned by you.

'You have altered me so completely, my dear Esther, that no one knows me; I paid ten thousand francs for a picture by Joseph Bridau because you told me that he was clever and unappreciated. I give every beggar I meet five francs in your name. Well, and what does the poor old man ask, who regards himself as your debtor when you do him the honour of accepting anything he can give you? He asks only for a hope—and what a hope, good God! Is it not rather the certainty of never having anything from you but what my passion may seize? The fire in my heart will abet your cruel deceptions. You find me ready to submit to every condition you can impose on my happiness, on my few pleasures; but promise me at least that on the day when you take possession of your house you will accept the heart and service of him who, for the rest of his days, must sign himself your slave,

'Frédéric de Nucingen.'

'Faugh! how he bores me—this money bag!' cried Esther, a courtesan once more. She took a small sheet of notepaper and wrote all over it, as close as it could go, Scribe's famous phrase, which has become a proverb, 'Prenez mon ours.'

A quarter of an hour later, Esther, overcome by remorse, wrote the following letter:—

'Monsieur le Baron,—

'Pay no heed to the note you have just received from me; I had relapsed into the folly of my youth. Forgive, Monsieur, a poor girl who ought to be your slave.

I never more keenly felt the degradation of my position than on the day when I was handed over to you. You have paid; I owe myself to you. There is nothing more sacred than a debt of dishonour. I have no right to compound it by throwing myself into the Seine.

'A debt can always be discharged in that dreadful coin which is good only to the debtor; you will find me yours to command. I will pay off in one night all the sums for which that fatal hour has been mortgaged; and I am sure that such an hour with me is worth millions—all the more because it will be the only one, the last. I shall then have paid the debt, and may get away from life. A good woman has a chance of restoration after a fall; but we, the like of us, fall too low.

'My determination is so fixed that I beg you will keep this letter in evidence of the cause of death of her who remains, for one day, your servant,

'ESTHER.'

Having sent this letter, Esther felt a pang of regret. Ten minutes after she wrote a third note, as follows:—

'Forgive me, dear Baron—it is I once more. I did not mean either to make game of you or to wound you; I only want you to reflect on this simple argument: If we were to continue in the position towards each other of father and daughter, your pleasure would be small, but it would be enduring. If you insist on the terms of the bargain, you will live to mourn for me.

'I will trouble you no more: the day when you shall choose pleasure rather than happiness will have no morrow for me.—Your daughter,

'ESTHER.'

On receiving the first letter, the Baron fell into a cold fury such as a millionaire may die of; he looked at himself in the glass and rang the bell.

'An hot bat for mein feet,' said he to his new valet.

While he was sitting with his feet in the bath, the second letter came; he read it, and fainted away. He was carried to bed.

When the banker recovered consciousness, Madame de Nucingen was sitting at the foot of the bed.

'The hussy is right!' said she. 'Why do you try to buy love? Is it to be bought in the market?—Let me see your letter to her.'

The Baron gave her sundry rough drafts he had made; Madame de Nucingen read them, and smiled. Then came Esther's third letter.

'She is a wonderful girl!' cried the Baroness, when she had read it.

'Vat shall I do, Montame?' asked the Baron of his wife.

'Wait.'

'Wait? But nature is pitiless!' he cried.

'Look here, my dear, you have been admirably kind to me,' said Delphine; 'I will give you some good advice.'

'You are a ver' goot voman,' said he. 'Ven you hafe any debts I shall pay.'

'Your state on receiving these letters touches a woman far more than the spending of millions, or than all the letters you could write, however fine they may be. Try to let her know it, indirectly; perhaps she will be yours! And—have no scruples, she will not die of that,' added she, looking keenly at her husband.

But Madame de Nucingen knew nothing whatever of the nature of such women.

'Vat a clefer voman is Montame de Nucingen!' said the Baron to himself when his wife had left him.

'Still, the more the Baron admired the subtlety of his wife's counsel, the less could he see how he might act upon it; and he not only felt that he was stupid, but he told himself so.

'The stupidity of wealthy men, though it is almost proverbial, is only comparative. The faculties of the mind, like the dexterity of the limbs, need exercise. The dancer's strength is in his feet; the blacksmith's in his arms; the market porter is trained to carry loads; the singer works his larynx; and the pianist hardens his wrist. A banker is practised in business matters; he studies and plans them, and pulls the wires of various interests, just as a playwright trains his intelligence in combining situations, studying his actors, giving life to his dramatic figures.

We should no more look for powers of conversation in the Baron de Nucingen than for the imagery of a poet in the brain of a mathematician. How many poets occur in an age, who are either good prose writers, or as witty in the intercourse of daily life as Madame Cornuel? Buffon was dull company; Newton was never in love; Lord Byron loved nobody but himself; Rousseau was gloomy and half crazy; La Fontaine absent-minded. Human energy, equally distributed, produces dolts, mediocrity in all; unequally bestowed it gives rise to those incongruities to whom the name of Genius is given, and which, if we only could see them, would look like deformities. The same law governs the body; perfect beauty is generally allied with coldness or silliness. Though Pascal was both a great mathematician and a great writer, though Beaumarchais was a good man of business, and Zamet a profound courtier, these rare exceptions prove the general principle of the specialisation of brain faculties.

Within the sphere of speculative calculations the banker put forth as much intelligence and skill, finesse and mental power, as a practised diplomatist expends on national affairs. If he were equally remarkable outside his office, the banker would be a great man. Nucingen made one with the Prince de Ligne, with Mazarin or with Diderot, is a human formula that is almost incon-

ceivable, but which has nevertheless been known as Pericles, Aristotle, Voltaire, and Napoleon. The splendour of the Imperial crown must not blind us to the merits of the individual; the Emperor was charming, well informed, and witty.

Monsieur de Nucingen, a banker and nothing more, having no inventiveness outside his business, like most bankers, had no faith in anything but sound security. In matters of art he had the good sense to go, cash in hand, to experts in every branch, and had recourse to the best architect, the best surgeon, the greatest connoisseur in pictures or statues, the cleverest lawyer, when he wished to build a house, to attend to his health, to purchase a work of art or an estate. But as there are no recognised experts in intrigue, no connoisseurs in love affairs, a banker finds himself in difficulties when he is in love, and much puzzled as to the management of a woman. So Nucingen could think of no better method than that he had hitherto pursued—to give a sum of money to some Frontin, male or female, to act and think for him.

Madame de Saint-Estève alone could carry out the plan imagined by the Baroness. Nucingen bitterly regretted having quarrelled with the odious old clothes seller. However, feeling confident of the attractions of his cash-box and the soothing documents signed *Garat*, he rang for his man and told him to inquire for the repulsive widow in the Rue Saint-Marc, and desire her to come to see him.

In Paris extremes are made to meet by passion. Vice is constantly binding the rich to the poor, the great to the mean. The Empress consults Mademoiselle Lenormand; the fine gentleman in every age can always find a Ramponneau.

The man returned within two hours.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said he, 'Madame de Saint-Estève is ruined.'

'Ah! so much de better!' cried the Baron in glee. 'I shall hafe her safe den.'

'The good woman is given to gambling, it would seem,' the valet went on. 'And, moreover, she is under the thumb of a third-rate actor in a suburban theatre, whom, for decency's sake, she calls her godson. She is a first-rate cook, it would seem, and wants a place.'

'Dose teufel of geniuses of de common people hafe alvays ten vays of making money, and ein dozen vays of spending it,' said the Baron to himself, quite unconscious that Panurge had thought the same thing.

He sent his servant off in quest of Madame de Saint-Estève, who did not come till the next day. Being questioned by Asie, the servant revealed to this female spy the terrible effects of the notes written to Monsieur le Baron by his mistress.

'Monsieur must be desperately in love with the woman,' said he in conclusion, 'for he was very near dying. For my part, I advised him never to go back to her, for he will be wheedled over at once. A woman who has already cost Monsieur le Baron five hundred thousand francs, they say, without counting what he has spent on the house in the Rue Saint-Georges! But the woman cares for money, and for money only.—As Madame came out of Monsieur's room, she said with a laugh: "If this goes on, that slut will make a widow of me!"'

'The devil!' cried Asie; 'it will never do to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.'

'Monsieur le Baron has no hope now but in you,' said the valet.

'Ah! The fact is, I do know how to make a woman go.'

'Well, walk in,' said the man, bowing to such occult powers.

'Well,' said the false Saint-Estève, going into the sufferer's room with an abject air, 'Monsieur le Baron

has met with some little difficulties? What can you expect! Everybody is open to attack on his weak side. Dear me, I have had my troubles too. Within two months the wheel of Fortune has turned upside down for me. Here I am looking out for a place!—We have neither of us been very wise. If Monsieur le Baron would take me as cook to Madame Esther, I would be the most devoted of slaves. I should be useful to you, Monsieur, to keep an eye on Eugénie and Madame.'

'Dere is no hope of dat,' said the Baron. 'I cannot succeet in being de master, I am let such a tance as——'

'As a top,' Asie put in. 'Well, you have made others dance, Daddy, and the little slut has got you, and is making a fool of you.—Heaven is just!'

'Just?' said the Baron. 'I hafe not sent for you to preach to me——'

'Pooh, my boy! A little moralising breaks no bones. It is the salt of life to the like of us, as vice is to your bigots.—Come, have you been generous? You have paid her debts?'

'Ja,' said the Baron lamentably.

'That is well; and you have taken her things out of pawn, and that is better. But you must see that it is not enough. All this gives her no occupation, and these creatures love to cut a dash——'

'I shall hafe a surprise for her, Rue Saint-Georches—she knows dat,' said the Baron. But I shall not be made a fool of.'

'Very well then, let her go.'

'I am only afrait dat she shall let me go!' cried the Baron.

'And we want our money's worth, my boy,' replied Asie. 'Listen to me. We have fleeced the public of some millions, my little friend? Twenty-five millions I am told you possess.'

The Baron could not suppress a smile.

'Well, you must let one go.'

'I shall let one go, but as soon as I shall let one go, I shall hafe to give still another.'

'Yes, I understand,' replied Asie. 'You will not say B for fear of having to go on to Z. Still, Esther is a good girl——'

'A ver' honest girl,' cried the banker. 'An' she is ready to submit; but only as in payment of a debt.'

'In short, she does not want to be your mistress; she feels an aversion.—Well, and I understand it; the child has always done just what she pleased. When a girl has never known any but charming young men, she cannot take to an old one. You are not handsome; you are as big as Louis XVIII., and rather dull company, as all men are who try to cajole fortune instead of devoting themselves to women.—Well, if you don't think six hundred thousand francs too much,' said Asie, 'I pledge myself to make her whatever you can wish.'

'Six hundert tousant franc!' cried the Baron, with a start. 'Esther is to cost me a million to begin with!'

'Happiness is surely worth sixteen hundred thousand francs, you old sinner. You must know, men in these days have certainly spent more than one or two millions on a mistress. I even know women who have cost men their lives, for whom heads have rolled into the basket.—You knew the doctor who poisoned his friend? He wanted the money to gratify a woman.'

'Ja, I know all dat. But if I am in lofe, I am not ein idiot, at least vile I am here; but if I shall see her, I shall gife her my pocket-book——'

'Well, listen, Monsieur le Baron,' said Asie, assuming the attitude of a Semiramis. 'You have been squeezed dry enough already. Now, as sure as my name is Saint-Estève—in the way of business, of course—I will stand by you.'

'Goot, I shall repay you.'

'I believe you, my boy, for I have shown you that I know how to be revenged. Besides, I tell you this,

Daddy, I know how to snuff out your Madame Esther as you would snuff a candle. And I know my lady! When the little hussy has once made you happy, she will be even more necessary to you than she is at this moment. You paid me well; you have allowed yourself to be fooled, but, after all, you have forked out.—I have fulfilled my part of the agreement, haven't I? Well, look here, I will make a bargain with you.'

'Let me hear.'

'You shall get me the place as cook to Madame, engage me for ten years, and pay the last five in advance —what is that? Just a little earnest-money! When once I am about Madame, I can bring her to these terms. Of course, you must first order her a lovely dress from Madame Auguste, who knows her style and taste; and order the new carriage to be at the door at four o'clock. After the Bourse closes, go to her rooms and take her for a little drive in the Bois de Boulogne. Well, by that act the woman proclaims herself your mistress; she has advertised herself to the eyes and knowledge of all Paris: A hundred thousand francs.—You must dine with her—I know how to cook such a dinner!—You must take her to the play, to the Variétés, to a stage-box, and then all Paris will say, "There is that old rascal Nucingen with his mistress." It is very flattering to know that such things are said.—Well, all this, for I am not grasping, is included for the first hundred thousand francs.—In a week, by such conduct, you will have made some way——'

'But I shall hafe paid ein hundert tousant franc.'

'In the course of the second week,' Asie went on, as though she had not heard this lamentable ejaculation, 'Madame, tempted by these preliminaries, will have made up her mind to leave her little apartment and move to the house you are giving her. Your Esther will have seen the world again, have found her old friends; she will wish to shine and do the honours of

her palace—it is in the nature of things: Another hundred thousand francs!—By Heaven! you are at home there, Esther compromised—she must be yours. The rest is a mere trifle, in which you must play the principal part, old elephant. (How wide the monster opens his eyes!) Well, I will undertake that too: Four hundred thousand—and that, my fine fellow, you need not pay till the day after. What do you think of that for honesty? I have more confidence in you than you have in me. If I persuade Madame to show herself as your mistress, to compromise herself, to take every gift you offer her,—perhaps this very day, you will believe that I am capable of inducing her to throw open the pass of the Great Saint Bernard. And it is a hard job, I can tell you; it will take as much pulling to get your artillery through as it took the first Consul to get over the Alps.'

'But vy?'

'Her heart is full of love, old shaver, *rasibus*, as you say who know Latin,' replied Asie. 'She thinks herself the Queen of Sheba, because she has washed herself in sacrifices made for her lover—an idea that that sort of woman gets into her head! Well, well, old fellow, we must be just.—It is fine! That baggage would die of grief at being your mistress—I really should not wonder. But what I trust to, and I tell you to give you courage, is that there is good in the girl at bottom.'

'You hafe a genius for corruption,' said the Baron, who had listened to Asie in admiring silence, 'just as I hafe de knack of de banking.'

'Then it is settled, my pigeon?' said Asie.

'Done for fifty tousant franc insteat of ein hundert tousant!—An' I shall give you fife hundert tousant de day after my triumph.'

'Very good, I will set to work,' said Asie. 'And you may come, Monsieur,' she added respectfully. 'You will find Madame as soft already as a cat's back, and perhaps inclined to make herself pleasant.'

'Go, go, my goot voman,' said the banker, rubbing his hands.

And after seeing the horrible mulatto out of the house, he said to himself—

'How vise it is to hafe much money.'

He sprang out of bed, went down to his office, and resumed the conduct of his immense business with a light heart.

Nothing could be more fatal to Esther than the steps taken by Nucingen. The hapless girl, in defending her fidelity, was defending her life. This very natural instinct was what Carlos called prudery. Now Asie, not without taking such precautions as usual in such cases, went off to report to Carlos the conference she had held with the Baron, and all the profit she had made by it. The man's rage, like himself, was terrible; he came forthwith to Esther, in a carriage with the blinds drawn, driving into the courtyard. Still almost white with fury, the double-dyed forger went straight in to the poor girl's room; she looked at him—she was standing up—and she dropped on to a chair as though her legs had snapped.

'What is the matter, Monsieur?' said she, quaking in every limb.

'Leave us, Europe,' said he to the maid.

Esther looked at the woman as a child might look at its mother, from whom some assassin had snatched it to murder it.

'Do you know where you will send Lucien?' Carlos went on when he was alone with Esther.

'Where?' asked she in a low voice, venturing to glance at her executioner.

'Where I come from, my beauty.' Esther, as she looked at the man, saw red. 'To the hulks,' he added in an undertone.

Esther shut her eyes and stretched herself out, her

arms dropped, and she turned white. The man rang, and Prudence appeared.

'Bring her round,' he said coldly; 'I have not done.'

He walked up and down the drawing-room while waiting. Prudence-Europe was obliged to come and beg Monsieur to lift Esther on to the bed; he carried her with an ease that betrayed athletic strength.

They had to procure all the chemist's strongest stimulants to restore Esther to a sense of her woes. An hour later the poor girl was able to listen to this living nightmare, seated at the foot of her bed, his eyes fixed and glowing like two spots of molten lead.

'My little sweetheart,' said he, 'Lucien now stands between a splendid life, honoured, happy, and respected, and the hole full of water, mud, and gravel into which he was going to plunge when I met him. The house of Grandlieu requires of the dear boy an estate worth a million francs before securing for him the title of Marquis, and handing over to him that may-pole named Clotilde, by whose help he will rise to power. Thanks to you and me, Lucien has just purchased his maternal manor, the old Château de Rubempré, which, indeed, did not cost much—thirty thousand francs; but his lawyer, by clever negotiations, has succeeded in adding to it estates worth a million, on which three hundred thousand francs are paid. The château, the expenses, and percentages to the men who were put forward as a blind to conceal the transaction from the country people, have swallowed up the remainder.

'We have, to be sure, a hundred thousand francs invested in a business here, which a few months hence will be worth two to three hundred thousand francs; but there will still be four hundred thousand francs to be paid.

'In three days Lucien will be home from Angoulême, where he has been, because he must not be suspected of having found a fortune in remaking your bed——'

'Oh no!' cried she, looking up with a noble impulse.

'I ask you, then, is this a moment to scare off the Baron?' he went on calmly. 'And you very nearly killed him the day before yesterday; he fainted like a woman on reading your second letter. You have a fine style—I congratulate you! If the Baron had died, where should we be now?—When Lucien walks out of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin son-in-law to the Duc de Grandlieu, if you want to try a dip in the Seine——Well, my beauty, I offer you my hand for a dive together. It is one way of ending matters.

'But consider a moment. Would it not be better to live and say to yourself again and again, "This fine fortune, this happy family"—for he will have children—children!—Have you ever thought of the joy of running your fingers through the hair of his children?'

Esther closed her eyes with a little shiver.

'Well, as you gaze on that structure of happiness, you may say to yourself, "This is my doing!"'

There was a pause, and the two looked at each other.

'This is what I have tried to make out of such despair as saw no issue but the river,' said Carlos. 'Am I selfish? That is the way to love! Men show such devotion to none but kings! But I have anointed Lucien king. If I were riveted for the rest of my days to my old chain, I fancy I could stay there resigned so long as I could say, "He is gay, he is at Court." My soul and mind would triumph, while my carcase was given over to the gaolers! You are a mere female; you love like a female! But in a courtesan, as in all degraded creatures, love should be a means to motherhood, in spite of Nature, which has stricken you with barrenness!

'If ever, under the skin of the Abbé Carlos Herrera any one were to detect the convict I have been, do you know what I would do to avoid compromising Lucien?'

Esther awaited the reply with some anxiety.

'Well,' he said after a brief pause, 'I would die as the negroes do—without a word. And you, with all

your airs, will put folks on my traces. What did I require of you ?—To be La Torpille again for six months —for six weeks ; and to do it to clutch a million.

'Lucien will never forget you. Men do not forget the being of whom they are reminded day after day by the joy of awaking rich every morning. Lucien is a better fellow than you are. He began by loving Coralie. She died—good ; but he had not money enough to bury her ; he did not do as you did just now, he did not faint, though he is a poet ; he wrote six rollicking songs, and earned three hundred francs, with which he paid for Coralie's funeral. I have those songs ; I know them by heart. Well, then, do you too compose your songs : be cheerful, be wild, be irresistible and—insatiable ! You hear me ?—Do not let me have to speak again.

'Kiss papa. Good-bye.'

When, half an hour after, Europe went into her mistress's room, she found her kneeling in front of a crucifix, in the attitude which the most religious of painters has given to Moses before the burning bush on Horeb, to depict his deep and complete adoration of Jehovah. After saying her prayers, Esther had renounced her better life, the honour she had created for herself, her glory, her virtue, and her love.

She rose.

'Oh, Madame, you will never look like that again !' cried Prudence Servien, struck by her mistress's sublime beauty.

She hastily turned the long mirror so that the poor girl should see herself. Her eyes still had a light as of the soul flying heavenward. The Jewess's complexion was brilliant. Sparkling with tears unshed in the fervour of prayer, her eyelashes were like leaves after a summer shower, for the last time they shone with the sunshine of pure love. Her lips seemed to preserve an expression as of her last appeal to the angels, whose palm of martyrdom she had no doubt

borrowed while placing in their hands her past unspotted life. And she had the majesty which Mary Stuart must have shown at the moment when she bid adieu to her crown, to earth, and to love.

'I wish Lucien could have seen me thus!' she said with a smothered sigh. 'Now,' she added, in a strident tone, 'now for a fling!'

Europe stood dumb at hearing the words, as though she had heard an angel blaspheme.

'Well, why need you stare at me to see if I have cloves in my mouth instead of teeth? I am nothing henceforth but a vile, foul creature, a thief—and I expect milord. So get me a hot bath, and put my dress out. It is twelve o'clock; the Baron will look in, no doubt, when the Bourse closes; I shall tell him I was waiting for him, and Asie is to prepare us dinner, first-chop, mind you; I mean to turn the man's brain.—Come, hurry, hurry, my girl; we are going to have some fun —that is to say, we must go to work.'

She sat down at the table and wrote the following note:—

'My Friend,—If the cook you have sent me had not already been in my service, I might have thought that your purpose was to let me know how often you had fainted yesterday on receiving my three notes. (What can I say? I was very nervous that day; I was thinking over the memories of my miserable existence.) But I know how sincere Asie is. Still, I cannot repent of having caused you so much pain, since it has availed to prove to me how much you love me. This is how we are made, we luckless and despised creatures; true affection touches us far more deeply than finding ourselves the objects of lavish liberality. For my part, I have always rather dreaded being a peg on which you would hang your vanities. It annoyed me to be nothing else to you. Yes, in spite of all your protesta-

tions, I fancied you regarded me merely as a woman paid for.

'Well, you will now find me a good girl, but on condition of your always obeying me a little.

'If this letter can in any way take the place of the doctor's prescription, prove it by coming to see me after the Bourse closes. You will find me in full fig, dressed in your gifts, for I am for life your pleasure-machine,

'ESTHER.'

At the Bourse the Baron de Nucingen was so gay, so cheerful, seemed so easy-going, and allowed himself so many jests, that du Tillet and the Kellers, who were on 'change, could not help asking him the reason of his high spirits.

'I am belofed. Ve shall soon gife dat house-varming,' he told du Tillet.

'And how much does it cost you?' asked François Keller rudely—it was said that he had spent twenty-five thousand francs a year on Madame Colleville.

'Dat voman is an anchel! She never has ask' me for one sou.'

'They never do,' replied du Tillet. 'And it is to avoid asking that they have always aunts or mothers.'

Between the Bourse and the Rue Taitbout seven times did the Baron say to his servant—

'You go so slow—vip de horse!'

He ran lightly upstairs, and for the first time saw his mistress in all the beauty of such women, who have no other occupation than the care of their person and their dress. Just out of her bath the flower was quite fresh, and perfumed so as to inspire desire in Robert d'Arbrissel.

Esther was in a charming toilette. A dress of black corded silk trimmed with rose-coloured gimp opened over a petticoat of grey satin, the costume subsequently worn by Amigo, the handsome singer, in *I Puritani.*

A Honiton lace kerchief fell or floated over her shoulders. The sleeves of her gown were strapped round with cording to divide the puffs, which for some little time fashion has substituted for the large sleeves which had grown too monstrous. Esther had fastened a Mechlin lace cap on her magnificent hair with a pin, *à la folle*, as it was called, ready to fall, but not really falling, giving her an appearance of being tumbled and in disorder, though the white parting showed plainly on her little head between the waves of her hair.

'Is it not a shame to see Madame so lovely in a shabby drawing-room like this?' said Europe to the Baron, as she admitted him.

'Vel, den, come to de Rue Saint-Georches,' said the Baron, coming to a full stop like a dog marking a partridge. 'The veather is splendit, ve shall drife to de Champs Elysées, and Montame Saint-Estèfe and Eugénie shall carry dere all your clo'es an' your linen, an' ve shall dine in de Rue Saint-Georches.'

'I will do whatever you please,' said Esther, 'if only you will be so kind as to call my cook Asie, and Eugénie Europe. I have given those names to all the women who have served me ever since the two first. I do not love change——'

'Asie, Europe!' echoed the Baron, laughing. 'How ver' droll you are.—You hafe infentions.—I should hafe eaten many dinners before I should hafe call' a cook Asie.'

'It is our business to be droll,' said Esther. 'Come, now, may not a poor girl be fed by Asia and dressed by Europe when you live on the whole world? It is a myth, I say; some women would devour the earth, I only ask for half.—You see?'

'Vat a voman is Montame Saint-Estèfe!' said the Baron to himself as he admired Esther's changed demeanour.

'Europe, my girl, I want my bonnet,' said Esther.

'I must have a black satin bonnet lined with pink and trimmed with lace.'

'Madame Thomas has not sent it home.—Come, Monsieur le Baron; quick, off you go! Begin your functions as a man-of-all-work—that is to say, of all pleasure! Happiness is burthensome. You have your carriage here, go to Madame Thomas,' said Europe to the Baron. 'Make your servant ask for the bonnet for Madame van Bogseck.—And, above all,' she added in his ear, 'bring her the most beautiful bouquet to be had in Paris. It is winter, so try to get tropical flowers.'

The Baron went downstairs and told his servants to go to 'Montame Thomas.'

The coachman drove to a famous pastrycook's.

'She is a milliner, you damn' idiot, and not a cake-shop!' cried the Baron, who rushed off to Madame Prévôt's in the Palais-Royal, where he had a bouquet made up for the price of ten louis, while his man went to the great modiste.

A superficial observer, walking about Paris, wonders who the fools can be that buy the fabulous flowers that grace the illustrious bouquetière's shop window, and the choice products displayed by Chevet of European fame—the only purveyor who can vie with the Rocher de Cancale in a real and delicious *Revue des deux Mondes*.

Well, every day in Paris a hundred or more passions *à la* Nucingen come into being, and find expression in offering such rarities as queens dare not purchase, presented, kneeling, to baggages who, to use Asie's word, like to cut a dash. But for these little details, a decent citizen would be puzzled to conceive how a fortune melts in the hands of these women, whose social function, in Fourier's scheme, is perhaps to rectify the disasters caused by avarice and cupidity. Such squandering is, no doubt, to the social body what a prick of the lancet is to a plethoric subject. In two months Nucingen

had shed broadcast on trade more than two hundred thousand francs.

By the time the old lover returned, darkness was falling; the bouquet was no longer of any use. The hour for driving in the Champs-Elysées in winter is between two and four. However, the carriage was of use to convey Esther from the Rue Taitbout to the Rue Saint-Georges, where she took possession of the 'little palace.' Never before had Esther been the object of such worship or such lavishness, and it amazed her; but, like all royal ingrates, she took care to express no surprise.

When you go into St. Peter's at Rome, to enable you to appreciate the extent and height of this queen of cathedrals, you are shown the little finger of a statue which looks of a natural size, and which measures I know not how much. Descriptions have been so severely criticised, necessary as they are to a history of manners, that I must here follow the example of the Roman Cicerone. As they entered the dining-room, the Baron could not resist asking Esther to feel the stuff of which the window curtains were made, draped with magnificent fulness, lined with white watered silk, and bordered with a gimp fit to trim a Portuguese princess's bodice. The material was silk brought from Canton, on which Chinese patience had painted Oriental birds with a perfection only to be seen in mediæval illuminations, or in the Missal of Charles v., the pride of the Imperial library at Vienna.

'It hafe cost two tousand franc' an ell for a milord who brought it from Intia——'

'It is very nice, charming,' said Esther. 'How I shall enjoy drinking champagne here; the froth will not get dirty here on a bare floor.'

'Oh! Madame!' cried Europe, 'only look at the carpet!'

'Dis carpet hafe been made for de Duc de Torlonia,

a frient of mine, who fount it too dear, so I took it for you who are my queen,' said Nucingen.

By chance this carpet, by one of our cleverest designers, matched with the whimsicalities of the Chinese curtains. The walls, painted by Schinner and Léon de Lora, represented voluptuous scenes, in carved ebony frames, purchased for their weight in gold from Dusommerard, and forming panels with a narrow line of gold that coyly caught the light.

From this you may judge of the rest.

'You did well to bring me here,' said Esther. 'It will take me a week to get used to my home and not to look like a parvenue in it——'

'*My* home! Den you shall accept it?' cried the Baron in glee.

'Why, of course, and a thousand times of course, stupid animal,' said she, smiling.

'Animal vas enough——'

'Stupid is a term of endearment,' said she, looking at him.

The poor man took Esther's hand and pressed it to his heart. He was animal enough to feel, but too stupid to find words.

'Feel how it beats—for ein little tender vort——'

And he conducted his goddess to her room.

'Oh, Madame, I cannot stay here!' cried Eugénie. 'It makes me long to go to bed.'

'Well,' said Esther, 'I mean to please the magician who has worked all these wonders.— Listen, my fat elephant, after dinner we will go to the play together. I am starving to see a play.'

It was just five years since Esther had been to a theatre. All Paris was rushing at that time to the Porte-Saint-Martin, to see one of those pieces to which the power of the actors lends a terrible expression of reality, *Richard Darlington*. Like all ingenuous natures, Esther loved to feel the thrills of fear as much as to yield to tears of pathos.

'Let us go to see Frédérick Lemaître,' said she; 'he is an actor I adore.'

'It is a horrible piece,' said Nucingen, foreseeing the moment when he must show himself in public.

He sent his servant to secure one of the two stage-boxes on the grand tier.—And this is another strange feature of Paris. Whenever success, on feet of clay, fills a house, there is always a stage-box to be had ten minutes before the curtain rises. The managers keep it for themselves, unless it happens to be taken for a passion *à la* Nucingen. This box, like Chevet's dainties, is a tax levied on the whims of the Parisian Olympus.

It would be superfluous to describe the plate and china. Nucingen had provided three services of plate—common, medium, and best; and the best—plates, dishes, and all, was of chased silver gilt. The banker, to avoid overloading the table with gold and silver, had completed the array of each service with porcelain of exquisite fragility in the style of Dresden china, which had cost more than the plate. As to the linen—Saxony, England, Flanders, and France vied in the perfection of flowered damask.

At dinner it was the Baron's turn to be amazed on tasting Asie's cookery.

'I understant,' said he, 'vy you call her Asie; dis is Asiatic cooking.'

'I begin to think he loves me,' said Esther to Europe; 'he has said something almost like a *bon mot*.'

'I said many vorts,' said he.

'Well! he is more like Turcaret than I had heard he was!' cried the girl, laughing at this reply, worthy of the many artless speeches for which the banker was famous.

The dishes were so highly spiced as to give the Baron an indigestion, on purpose that he might go home early; so this was all he got in the way of pleasure out of his first evening with Esther. At the theatre he was obliged

to drink an immense number of glasses of *eau sucrée*, leaving Esther alone between the acts.

By a coincidence so probable that it can scarcely be called chance, Tullia, Mariette, and Madame du Val-Noble were at the play that evening. *Richard Darlington* enjoyed a wild success—and a deserved success—such as is seen only in Paris. The men who saw this play all came to the conclusion that a lawful wife might be thrown out of window, and the wives loved to see themselves unjustly persecuted.

The women said to each other : 'This is too much ! we are driven to it—but it often happens !'

Now a woman as beautiful as Esther, and dressed as Esther was, could not show off with impunity in a stage-box at the Porte-Saint-Martin. And so, during the second act, there was quite a commotion in the box where the two dancers were sitting, caused by the undoubted identity of the unknown fair one with La Torpille.

'Hey day ! where has she dropped from ?' said Mariette to Madame du Val-Noble. 'I thought she was drowned.'

'But is it she ? She looks to me thirty-seven times younger and handsomer than she was six years ago.'

'Perhaps she has preserved herself in ice like Madame d'Espard and Madame Zayonchek,' said the Comte de Brambourg, who had brought the three women to the play, to a pit-tier box. 'Isn't she the "rat" you meant to send me to hocus my uncle ?' said he, addressing Tullia.

'The very same,' said the singer. 'Du Bruel, go down to the stalls and see if it is she.'

'What brass she has got !' exclaimed Madame du Val-Noble, using an expressive but vulgar phrase.

'Oh !' said the Comte de Brambourg, 'she very well may. She is with my friend the Baron de Nucingen—I will go——'

'Is that the immaculate Joan of Arc who has taken Nucingen by storm, and who has been talked of till we are all sick of her, these three months past?' asked Mariette.

'Good evening, my dear Baron,' said Philippe Bridau, as he went into Nucingen's box. 'So here you are, married to Mademoiselle Esther.—Mademoiselle, I am an old officer whom you once on a time were to have got out of a scrape—at Issoudun—Philippe Bridau——'

'I know nothing of it,' said Esther, looking round the house through her opera-glasses.

'Dis lady,' said the Baron, 'is no longer known as "Esther" so short! She is called Montame de Champy—ein little estate vat I have bought for her——'

'Though you do things in such style,' said the Comte, 'these ladies are saying that Madame de Champy gives herself too great airs.—If you do not choose to remember me, will you condescend to recognise Mariette, Tullia, Madame du Val-Noble?' the parvenu went on—a man for whom the Duc de Maufrigneuse had won the Dauphin's favour.

'If those ladies are kind to me, I am willing to make myself pleasant to them,' replied Madame de Champy drily.

'Kind! Why, they are excellent; they have named you Joan of Arc,' replied Philippe.

'Vell den, if dese ladies vill keep you company,' said Nucingen, 'I shall go 'vay, for I hafe eaten too much. Your carriage shall come for you and your people.—Dat teufel Asie!'

'The first time, and you leave me alone!' said Esther. 'Come, come, you must have courage enough to die on deck. I must have my man with me as I go out. If I were insulted, am I to cry out for nothing?'

The old millionaire's selfishness had to give way to his duties as a lover. The Baron suffered but stayed.

Esther had her own reasons for detaining 'her man.'

If she admitted her acquaintance, she would be less closely questioned in his presence than if she were alone. Philippe Bridau hurried back to the box where the dancers were sitting, and informed them of the state of affairs.

'Oh! so it is she who has fallen heir to my house in the Rue Saint-Georges,' observed Madame du Val-Noble with some bitterness; for she, as she phrased it, was on the loose.

'Most likely,' said the Colonel. 'Du Tillet told me that the Baron had spent three times as much there as your poor Falleix.'

'Let us go round to her box,' said Tullia.

'Not if I know it,' said Mariette; 'she is much too handsome. I will call on her at home.'

'I think myself good-looking enough to risk it,' remarked Tullia.

So the much-daring leading dancer went round between the acts and renewed acquaintance with Esther, who would talk only on general subjects.

'And where have you come back from, my dear child?' asked Tullia, who could not restrain her curiosity.

'Oh, I was for five years in a castle in the Alps with an Englishman, as jealous as a tiger, a nabob; I called him a *nabot*, a dwarf, for he was not so big as le bailli de Ferrette.

'And then I came across a banker—from a savage to salvation, as Florine might say. And now here I am in Paris again; I long so for amusement that I mean to have a rare time. I shall keep open house. I have five years of solitary confinement to make good, and I am beginning to do it. Five years of an Englishman is rather too much; six weeks are the allowance according to the advertisements.'

'Was it the Baron who gave you that lace?'

'No, it is a relic of the nabob.—What ill-luck I have, my dear! He was as yellow as a friend's smile at a success; I thought he would be dead in ten months.

Pooh! he was as strong as a mountain. Always distrust men who say they have a liver complaint. I will never listen to a man who talks of his liver.—I have had too much of livers—who cannot die. My nabob robbed me; he died without making a will, and the family turned me out of doors like a leper.—So, then, I said to my fat friend here, "Pay for two!"—You may well call me Joan of Arc; I have ruined England, and perhaps I shall die at the stake——'

'Of love?' said Tullia.

'And burnt alive,' answered Esther, and the question made her thoughtful.

The Baron laughed at all this vulgar nonsense, but he did not always follow it readily, so that his laughter sounded like the forgotten crackers that go off after fireworks.

We all live in a sphere of some kind, and the inhabitants of every sphere are endowed with an equal share of curiosity.

Next evening at the opera, Esther's reappearance was the great news behind the scenes. Between two and four in the afternoon all Paris in the Champs-Elysées had recognised La Torpille, and knew at last who was the object of the Baron de Nucingen's passion.

'Do you know,' Blondet remarked to de Marsay in the green-room at the opera-house, 'that La Torpille vanished the very day after the evening when we saw her here and recognised her in little Rubempré's mistress.'

In Paris, as in the provinces, everything is known. The police of the Rue de Jérusalem are not so efficient as the world itself, for every one is a spy on every one else, though unconsciously. Carlos had fully understood the danger of Lucien's position during and after the episode of the Rue Taitbout.

No position can be more dreadful than that in which

Madame du Val-Noble now found herself; and the phrase to be on the loose, or, as the French say, left on foot, expresses it perfectly. The recklessness and extravagance of these women precludes all care for the future. In that strange world, far more witty and amusing than might be supposed, only such women as are not gifted with that perfect beauty which time can hardly impair, and which is quite unmistakable—only such women, in short, as can be loved merely as a fancy, ever think of old age and save a fortune. The handsomer they are, the more improvident they are.

'Are you afraid of growing ugly that you are saving money?' was a speech of Florine's to Mariette, which may give a clue to one cause of this thriftlessness.

Thus, if a speculator kills himself, or a spendthrift comes to the end of his resources, these women fall with hideous promptitude from audacious wealth to the utmost misery. They throw themselves into the clutches of the old-clothes buyer, and sell exquisite jewels for a mere song; they run into debt, expressly to keep up a spurious luxury, in the hope of recovering what they have lost—a cash-box to draw upon. These ups and downs of their career account for the costliness of such connections, generally brought about as Asie had hooked (another word of her vocabulary) Nucingen for Esther.

And so those who know their Paris are quite aware of the state of affairs when, in the Champs-Elysées—that bustling and mongrel bazaar—they meet some woman in a hired fly whom six months or a year before they had seen in a magnificent and dazzling carriage, turned out in the most luxurious style.

'If you fall on Sainte-Pélagie, you must contrive to rebound on the Bois de Boulogne,' said Florine, laughing with Blondet over the little Vicomte de Portenduère.

Some clever women never run the risk of this contrast. They bury themselves in horrible furnished lodgings, where they expiate their extravagance by such privations

as are endured by travellers lost in a Sahara; but they never take the smallest fancy for economy. They venture forth to masked balls; they take journeys into the provinces; they turn out well dressed on the boulevards when the weather is fine. And then they find in each other the devoted kindness which is known only among proscribed races. It costs a woman in luck no effort to bestow some help, for she says to herself, 'I may be in the same plight by Sunday!'

However, the most efficient protector still is the purchaser of dress. When this greedy money-lender finds herself the creditor, she stirs and works on the hearts of all the old men she knows in favour of the mortgaged creature in thin boots and a fine bonnet.

In this way Madame du Val-Noble, unable to foresee the downfall of one of the richest and cleverest of stockbrokers, was left quite unprepared. She had spent Falleix's money on her whims, and trusted to him for all necessaries and to provide for the future.

'How could I have expected such a thing in a man who seemed such a good fellow?'

In almost every class of society the good fellow is an open-handed man, who will lend a few crowns now and again without expecting them back, who always behaves in accordance with a certain code of delicate feeling above mere vulgar, obligatory, and common-place morality. Certain men, regarded as virtuous and honest, have, like Nucingen, ruined their benefactors; and certain others, who have been through a criminal court, have an ingenious kind of honesty towards women. Perfect virtue, the dream of Molière, an Alceste, is exceedingly rare; still, it is to be found everywhere, even in Paris. The 'good fellow' is the product of a certain facility of nature which proves nothing. A man is a good fellow, as a cat is silky, as a slipper is made to slip on to the foot. And so, in the meaning given to the word by a kept woman, Falleix ought to

have warned his mistress of his approaching bankruptcy and have given her enough to live upon.

D'Estourny, the dashing swindler, was a good fellow; he cheated at cards, but he had set aside thirty thousand francs for his mistress. And at carnival suppers women would retort on his accusers: 'No matter. You may say what you like, Georges was a good fellow; he had charming manners, he deserved a better fate.'

These girls laugh laws to scorn, and adore a certain kind of generosity; they sell themselves, as Esther had done, for a secret ideal, which is their religion.

After saving a few jewels from the wreck with great difficulty, Madame du Val-Noble was crushed under the burthen of the horrible report: 'She ruined Falleix.' She was almost thirty; and though she was in the prime of her beauty, still she might be called an old woman, and all the more so because in such a crisis all a woman's rivals are against her. Mariette, Florine, Tullia would ask their friend to dinner, and gave her some help; but as they did not know the extent of her debts, they did not dare to sound the depths of that gulf. An interval of six years formed rather too long a gap in the ebb and flow of the Paris tide, between La Torpille and Madame du Val-Noble, for the woman 'on foot' to speak to the woman in her carriage; but La Val-Noble knew that Esther was too generous not to remember sometimes that she had, as she said, fallen heir to her possessions, and not to seek her out by some meeting which might seem accidental though arranged. To bring about such an accident, Madame du Val-Noble, dressed in the most lady-like way, walked out every day in the Champs-Elysées on the arm of Théodore Gaillard, who afterwards married her, and who, in these straits, behaved very well to his former mistress, giving her boxes at the play, and inviting her to every *spree*. She flattered herself that Esther, driving out one fine day, would meet her face to face.

Esther's coachman was Paccard—for her household had been made up in five days by Asie, Europe, and Paccard under Carlos' instructions, and in such a way that the house in the Rue Saint-Georges was an impregnable fortress.

Peyrade, on his part, prompted by deep hatred, by the thirst for vengeance, and, above all, by his wish to see his darling Lydie married, made the Champs-Elysées the end of his walks as soon as he heard from Contenson that Monsieur de Nucingen's mistress might be seen there. Peyrade could dress so exactly like an Englishman, and spoke French so perfectly with the mincing accent that the English give the language; he knew England itself so well, and was so familiar with all the customs of the country, having been sent to England by the police authorities three times between 1779 and 1786, that he could play his part in London and at ambassadors' residences without awaking suspicion. Peyrade, who had some resemblance to Musson the famous juggler, could disguise himself so effectually that once Contenson did not recognise him.

Followed by Contenson dressed as a mulatto, Peyrade examined Esther and her servants with an eye which, seeming heedless, took everything in. Hence it quite naturally happened that in the side alley where the carriage-company walk in fine dry weather, he was on the spot one day when Esther met Madame du Val-Noble. Peyrade, his mulatto in livery at his heels, was airing himself quite naturally, like a nabob who is thinking of no one but himself, in a line with the two women, so as to catch a few words of their conversation.

'Well, my dear child,' said Esther to Madame du Val-Noble, 'come and see me. Nucingen owes it to himself not to leave his stockbroker's mistress without a sou——'

'All the more so because it is said that he ruined

Falleix,' remarked Théodore Gaillard, 'and that we have every right to squeeze him.'

'He dines with me to-morrow,' said Esther; 'come and meet him.' Then she added in an undertone—

'I can do what I like with him, and as yet he has not that!' and she put the nail of a gloved finger under the prettiest of her teeth with the click that is familiarly known to express with peculiar energy: 'Just nothing.'

'You have him safe——'

'My dear, as yet he has only paid my debts.'

'How mean!' cried Suzanne du Val-Noble.

'Oh!' said Esther, 'I had debts enough to frighten a minister of finance. Now, I mean to have thirty thousand a year before the first stroke of midnight. Oh! he is excellent, I have nothing to complain of. He does it well.—In a week we give a housewarming; you must come.—That morning he is to make me a present of the lease of the house in the Rue Saint-Georges. In decency, it is impossible to live in such a house on less than thirty thousand francs a year—of my own, so as to have them safe in case of accident. I have known poverty, and I want no more of it. There are certain acquaintances one has had enough of at once.

'And you, who used to say, "My face is my fortune!"—How you have changed!' exclaimed Suzanne.

'It is the air of Switzerland; you grow thrifty there.—Look here; go there yourself, my dear! Catch a Swiss, and you may perhaps catch a husband, for they have not yet learned what such women as we are can be. And, at any rate, you may come back with a passion for investments in the funds—a most respectable and elegant passion!—Good-bye.'

Esther got into her carriage again, a handsome carriage drawn by the finest pair of dappled grey horses at that time to be seen in Paris.

'The woman who is getting into the carriage is handsome,' said Peyrade to Contenson, 'but I like the

one who is walking best; follow her, and find out who she is.'

'That is what that Englishman has just remarked in English,' said Théodore Gaillard, repeating Peyrade's remark to Madame du Val-Noble.

Before making this speech in English, Peyrade had uttered a word or two in that language, which had made Théodore look up in a way that convinced him that the journalist understood English.

Madame du Val-Noble very slowly made her way home to very decent furnished rooms in the Rue Louis-le-Grand, glancing round now and then to see if the mulatto were following her.

This establishment was kept by a certain Madame Gérard, whom Suzanne had obliged in the days of her splendour, and who showed her gratitude by giving her a suitable home. This good soul, an honest and virtuous citizen, even pious, looked on the courtesan as a woman of a superior order; she had always seen her in the midst of luxury, and thought of her as a fallen queen; she trusted her daughters with her; and—which is a fact more natural than might be supposed—the courtesan was as scrupulously careful in taking them to the play as their mother could have been, and the two Gérard girls loved her. The worthy, kind lodging-house keeper was like those sublime priests who see in these outlawed women only a creature to be saved and loved.

Madame du Val-Noble respected this worth; and often, as she chatted with the good woman, she envied her while bewailing her own ill-fortune.

'You are still handsome; you may make a good end yet,' Madame Gérard would say.

But, indeed, Madame du Val-Noble was only relatively impoverished. This woman's wardrobe, so extravagant and elegant, was still sufficiently well furnished to allow of her appearing on occasion—as on that evening at the Porte-Saint-Martin to see *Richard Darlington*—in much

splendour. And Madame Gérard would most good-naturedly pay for the cabs needed by the lady 'on foot' to go out to dine, or to the play, and to come home again.

'Well, dear Madame Gérard,' said she to this worthy mother, 'my luck is about to change, I believe.'

'Well, well, Madame, so much the better. But be prudent; do not run into debt any more. I have such difficulty in getting rid of the people who are hunting for you.'

'Oh, never worry yourself about those hounds! They have all made no end of money out of me.—Here are some tickets for the Variétés for your girls—a good box on the second tier. If any one should ask for me this evening before I come in, show them up all the same. Adèle, my old maid, will be here; I will send her round.'

Madame du Val-Noble, having neither mother nor aunt, was obliged to have recourse to her maid—equally on foot—to play the part of a Saint-Estève with the unknown follower whose conquest was to enable her to rise again in the world. She went to dine with Théodore Gaillard, who, as it happened, had a *spree* on that day, that is to say, a dinner given by Nathan in payment of a bet he had lost, one of those orgies when a man says to his guests, 'You can bring a woman.'

It was not without strong reasons that Peyrade had made up his mind to rush in person on to the field of this intrigue. At the same time, his curiosity, like Corentin's, was so keenly excited, that, even in the absence of reasons, he would have tried to play a part in the drama.

At this moment Charles x.'s policy had completed its last evolution. After confiding the helm of State to Ministers of his own choosing, the King was preparing to conquer Algiers, and to utilise the glory that should

accrue as a passport to what has been called his *Coup d'Etat*. There were no more conspiracies at home; Charles x. believed he had no domestic enemies. But in politics, as at sea, a calm may be deceptive.

Thus Corentin had lapsed into total idleness. In such a case a true sportsman, to keep his hand in, for lack of larks kills sparrows. Domitian, we know, for lack of Christians, killed flies. Contenson, having witnessed Esther's arrest, had, with the keen instinct of a spy, fully understood the upshot of the business. The rascal, as we have seen, did not attempt to conceal his opinion of the Baron de Nucingen.

'Who is benefiting by making the banker pay so dear for his passion?' was the first question the allies asked each other. Recognising Asie as a leading actor in the piece, Contenson hoped to find out the author through her; but she slipped through his fingers again and again, hiding like an eel in the mud of Paris; and when he found her again as the cook in Esther's establishment, it seemed to him inexplicable that the half-caste woman should have had a finger in the pie. Thus, for the first time, these two artistic spies had come on a text that they could not decipher, while suspecting a dark plot to the story.

After three bold attempts on the house in the Rue Taitbout, Contenson still met with absolute dumbness. So long as Esther dwelt there the lodge porter seemed to live in mortal terror. Asie had, perhaps, promised poisoned meat-balls to all the family in the event of any indiscretion.

On the day after Esther's removal, Contenson found this man rather more amenable; he regretted the lady, he said, who had fed him with the broken dishes from her table. Contenson, disguised as a broker, tried to bargain for the rooms, and listened to the porter's lamentations while he fooled him, casting a doubt on all the man said by a questioning 'Really?'

'Yes, Monsieur, the lady lived here for five years

without ever going out, and more by token, her lover, desperately jealous though she was beyond reproach, took the greatest precautions when he came in or went out. And a very handsome young man he was too!'

Lucien was at this time still staying with his sister, Madame Séchard; but as soon as he returned, Contenson sent the porter to the Quai Malaquais to ask Monsieur de Rubempré whether he were willing to part with the furniture left in the rooms lately occupied by Madame van Bogseck. The porter then recognised Lucien as the young widow's mysterious lover, and this was all that Contenson wanted. The deep but suppressed astonishment may be imagined with which Lucien and Carlos received the porter, whom they affected to regard as a madman; they tried to upset his convictions.

Within twenty-four hours Carlos had organised a force which detected Contenson red-handed in the act of espionage. Contenson, disguised as a market-porter, had twice already brought home the provisions purchased in the morning by Asie, and had twice got into the little mansion in the Rue Saint-Georges. Corentin, on his part, was making a stir; but he was stopped short by recognising the certain identity of Carlos Herrera; for he learned at once that this Abbé, the secret envoy of Ferdinand VII., had come to Paris towards the end of 1823. Still, Corentin thought it worth while to study the reasons which had led the Spaniard to take an interest in Lucien de Rubempré. It was soon clear to him, beyond doubt, that Esther had for five years been Lucien's mistress; so the substitution of the Englishwoman had been effected for the advantage of that young dandy.

Now Lucien had no means; he was rejected as a suitor for Mademoiselle de Grandlieu; and he had just bought up the lands of Rubempré at the cost of a million francs.

Corentin very skilfully made the head of the General Police take the first steps; and the Préfet de Police,

à propos to Peyrade, informed his chief that the appellants in that affair had been in fact the Comte de Sérizy and Lucien de Rubempré.

'We have it!' cried Peyrade and Corentin.

The two friends had laid plans in a moment.

'This hussy,' said Corentin, 'has had intimacies; she must have some women friends. Among them we shall certainly find one or another who is down on her luck; one of us must play the part of a rich foreigner and take her up. We will throw them together. They always want something of each other in the game of lovers, and we shall then be in the citadel.'

Peyrade naturally proposed to assume his disguise as an Englishman. The wild life he should lead during the time that it would take to disentangle the plot of which he had been the victim, smiled on his fancy; while Corentin, grown old in his functions, and weakly too, did not care for it. Disguised as a mulatto, Contenson at once evaded Carlos's force. Just three days before Peyrade's meeting with Madame du Val-Noble in the Champs-Elysées, this last of the agents employed by MM. de Sartine and Lenoir had arrived, provided with a passport, at the Hôtel Mirabeau, Rue de la Paix, having come from the Colonies *viâ* le Havre, in a travelling chaise, as mud-splashed as though it had really come from le Havre, instead of no further than by the road from Saint-Denis to Paris.

Carlos Herrera, on his part, had his passport *visé* at the Spanish Embassy, and arranged everything at the Quai Malaquais to start for Madrid. And this is why. Within a few days Esther was to become the owner of the house in the Rue Saint-Georges and of shares yielding thirty thousand francs a year; Europe and Asie were quite cunning enough to persuade her to sell these shares and privately transmit the money to Lucien. Thus Lucien, proclaiming himself rich through his sister's liberality, would pay the remainder of the price

of the Rubempré estates. Of this transaction no one could complain. Esther alone could betray herself; but she would die rather than blink an eyelash.

Clotilde had appeared with a little pink kerchief round her crane's neck, so she had won her game at the Hôtel de Grandlieu. The shares in the Omnibus Company were already worth thrice their initial value. Carlos, by disappearing for a few days, would put malice off the scent. Human prudence had foreseen everything; no error was possible. The false Spaniard was to start on the morrow of the day when Peyrade met Madame du Val-Noble. But that very night, at two in the morning, Asie came in a cab to the Quai Malaquais, and found the stoker of the machine smoking in his room, and reconsidering all the points of the situation here stated in a few words, like an author going over a page of his book to discover any faults to be corrected. Such a man would not allow himself a second time such an oversight as that of the porter in the Rue Taitbout.

'Paccard,' whispered Asie in her master's ear, 'recognised Contenson yesterday, at half-past two, in the Champs-Elysées, disguised as a mulatto servant to an Englishman, who for the last three days has been seen walking in the Champs-Elysées, watching Esther. Paccard knew the hound by his eyes, as I did when he dressed up as a market-porter. Paccard drove the girl home, taking a round so as not to lose sight of the wretch. Contenson is at the Hôtel Mirabeau; but he exchanged so many signs of intelligence with the Englishman, that Paccard says the other cannot possibly be an Englishman.'

'We have a gadfly behind us,' said Carlos. 'I will not leave till the day after to-morrow. That Contenson is certainly the man who sent the porter after us from the Rue Taitbout; we must ascertain whether this sham Englishman is our foe.'

At noon Mr. Samuel Johnson's black servant was

solemnly waiting on his master, who always breakfasted too heartily, with a purpose. Peyrade wished to pass for a tippling Englishman; he never went out till he was half-seas over. He wore black cloth gaiters up to his knees, and padded to make his legs look stouter; his trousers were lined with the thickest fustian; his waistcoat was buttoned to the chin; a blue handkerchief wrapped his throat up to his cheeks; a red scratch wig hid half his forehead, and he had added nearly three inches to his height; in short, the oldest frequenter of the Café David could not have recognised him. From his square-cut coat of black cloth with full skirts he might have been taken for an English millionaire.

Contenson made a show of the cold insolence of a nabob's confidential servant; he was taciturn, abrupt, scornful, and uncommunicative, and indulged in fierce exclamations and uncouth gestures.

Peyrade was finishing his second bottle when one of the hotel waiters unceremoniously showed in a man in whom Peyrade and Contenson both at once discerned a gendarme in mufti.

'Monsieur Peyrade,' said the gendarme to the nabob, speaking in his ear, 'my instructions are to take you to the Préfecture.'

Peyrade, without saying a word, rose and took down his hat.

'You will find a hackney coach at the door,' said the man as they went downstairs. 'The Préfet thought of arresting you, but he decided on sending for you to ask some explanation of your conduct through the peace-officer whom you will find in the coach.'

'Shall I ride with you?' asked the gendarme of the peace-officer when Peyrade had got in.

'No,' replied the other; 'tell the coachman quietly to drive to the Préfecture.'

Peyrade and Carlos were now face to face in the coach. Carlos had a stiletto under his hand. The

coach-driver was a man he could trust, quite capable of allowing Carlos to get out without seeing him, or being surprised, on arriving at his journey's end, to find a dead body in his cab. No inquiries are ever made about a spy. The law almost always leaves such murders unpunished, it is so difficult to know the rights of the case.

Peyrade looked with his keenest eye at the magistrate sent to examine him by the Préfet of Police. Carlos struck him as satisfactory: a bald head, deeply wrinkled at the back, and powdered hair; a pair of very light gold spectacles, with double-green glasses over weak eyes, with red rims, evidently needing care. These eyes seemed the trace of some squalid malady. A cotton shirt with a flat-pleated frill, a shabby black satin waistcoat, the trousers of a man of law, black spun silk stockings, and shoes tied with ribbon; a long black overcoat, cheap gloves, black, and worn for ten days, and a gold watch-chain — in every point the lower grade of magistrate known by a perversion of terms as a peace-officer.

'My dear Monsieur Peyrade, I regret to find such a man as you the object of surveillance, and that you should act so as to justify it. Your disguise is not to the Préfet's taste. If you fancy that you can thus escape our vigilance, you are mistaken. You travelled from England by way of Beaumont-sur-Oise, no doubt.'

'Beaumont-sur-Oise?' repeated Peyrade.

'Or by Saint-Denis?' said the sham lawyer.

Peyrade lost his presence of mind. The question must be answered. Now any reply might be dangerous. In the affirmative it was farcical; in the negative, if this man knew the truth, it would be Peyrade's ruin.

'He is a sharp fellow,' thought he.

He tried to look at the man and smile, and he gave him a smile for an answer; the smile passed muster without protest.

'For what purpose have you disguised yourself, taken rooms at the Mirabeau, and dressed Contenson as a black servant?' asked the peace-officer.

'Monsieur le Préfet may do what he chooses with me, but I owe no account of my actions to any one but my chief,' said Peyrade with dignity.

'If you mean me to infer that you are acting by the orders of the General Police,' said the other coldly, 'we will change our route, and drive to the Rue de Grenelle instead of the Rue de Jérusalem. I have clear instructions with regard to you. But be careful! You are not in any deep disgrace, and you may spoil your own game in a moment. As for me—I owe you no grudge. —Come; tell me the truth.'

'Well, then, this is the truth,' said Peyrade, with a glance at his Cerberus' red eyes.

The sham lawyer's face remained expressionless, impassible; he was doing his business, all truths were the same to him, he looked as though he suspected the Préfet of some caprice. Préfets have their little tantrums.

'I have fallen desperately in love with a woman—the mistress of that stock-broker who is gone abroad for his own pleasure and the displeasure of his creditors—Falleix.'

'Madame du Val-Noble?'

'Yes,' replied Peyrade. 'To keep her for a month, which will not cost me more than a thousand crowns, I have got myself up as a nabob and taken Contenson as my servant. This is so absolutely true, Monsieur, that if you like to leave me in the coach, where I will wait for you, on my honour as an old Commissioner-General of Police, you can go to the hotel and question Contenson. Not only will Contenson confirm what I have the honour of stating, but you may see Madame du Val-Noble's waiting-maid, who is to come this morning to signify her mistress's acceptance of my offers, or the conditions she makes.

'An old monkey knows what grimaces mean: I have offered her a thousand francs a month and a carriage—that comes to fifteen hundred; five hundred francs' worth of presents, and as much again in some outings, dinners and play-going; you see, I am not deceiving you by a centime when I say a thousand crowns.—A man of my age may very well spend a thousand crowns on his last fancy.'

'Bless me, Papa Peyrade! and you still care enough for women to——? But you are deceiving me. I am sixty myself, and I can do without 'em.—However, if the case is as you state it, I quite understand that you should have found it necessary to get yourself up as a foreigner to indulge your fancy.'

'You can understand that Peyrade, or old Canquoëlle of the Rue des Moineaux——'

'Ay, neither of them would have suited Madame du Val-Noble,' Carlos put in, delighted to have picked up Canquoëlle's address. 'Before the Revolution,' he went on, 'I had for my mistress a woman who had previously been kept by the gentleman-in-waiting, as they then called the executioner. One evening at the play she pricked herself with a pin, and cried out—a customary ejaculation in those days—"Ah! Bourreau!" on which her neighbour asked her if this were a reminiscence?—Well, my dear Peyrade, she cast off her man for that speech.

'I suppose you have no wish to expose yourself to such a slap in the face.—Madame du Val-Noble is a woman for gentlemen. I saw her once at the opera, and thought her very handsome.

'Tell the driver to go back to the Rue de la Paix, my dear Peyrade. I will go upstairs with you to your rooms and see for myself. A verbal report will no doubt be enough for Monsieur le Préfet.'

Carlos took a snuff-box from his side-pocket—a black snuff-box lined with silver-gilt—and offered it to Peyrade

with an impulse of delightful good-fellowship. Peyrade said to himself—

'And these are their agents! Good Heavens! what would Monsieur Lenoir say if he could come back to life, or Monsieur de Sartines?'

'That is part of the truth, no doubt, but it is not all,' said the sham lawyer, sniffing up his pinch of snuff. 'You have had a finger in the Baron de Nucingen's love affairs, and you wish, no doubt, to entangle him in some slip-knot. You missed fire with the pistol, and you are aiming at him with a field-piece. Madame du Val-Noble is a friend of Madame de Champy's——'

'Devil take it. I must take care not to founder,' said Peyrade to himself. 'He is a better man than I thought him. He is playing me; he talks of letting me go, and he goes on making me blab.'

'Well?' asked Carlos with a magisterial air.

'Monsieur, it is true that I have been so foolish as to seek a woman in Monsieur de Nucingen's behoof, because he was half mad with love. That is the cause of my being out of favour, for it would seem that quite unconsciously I touched some important interests.'

The officer of the law remained immovable.

'But after fifty-two years' experience,' Peyrade went on, 'I know the police well enough to have held my hand after the blowing up I had from Monsieur le Préfet, who, no doubt, was right——'

'Then you would give up this fancy if Monsieur le Préfet required it of you? That, I think, would be the best proof you could give of the sincerity of what you say.'

'He is going it! he is going it!' thought Peyrade. 'Ah! by all that's holy, the police to-day is a match for that of Monsieur Lenoir.'

'Give it up?' said he aloud. 'I will wait till I have Monsieur le Préfet's orders.—But here we are at the hotel, if you wish to come up.'

'Where do you find the money?' said Carlos point-blank, with a sagacious glance.

'Monsieur, I have a friend——'

'Get along,' said Carlos; 'go and tell that story to an examining magistrate!'

This audacious stroke on Carlos' part was the outcome of one of those calculations, so simple that none but a man of his temper would have thought it out.

At a very early hour he had sent Lucien to Madame de Sérizy's. Lucien had begged the Count's private secretary—as from the Count—to go and obtain from the Préfet of Police full particulars concerning the agent employed by the Baron de Nucingen. The secretary came back provided with a note concerning Peyrade, a copy of the summary noted on the back of his record:—

'In the police force since 1778, having come to Paris from Avignon two years previously.

'Without money or character; possessed of certain State secrets.

'Lives in the Rue des Moineaux under the name of Canquoëlle, the name of a little estate where his family resides in the department of Vaucluse; very respectable people.

'Was lately inquired for by a grand-nephew named Théodore de la Peyrade. (See the report of an agent, No. 37 of the Documents.)'

'He must be the man to whom Contenson is playing the mulatto servant!' cried Carlos, when Lucien returned with other information besides this note.

Within three hours this man, with the energy of a Commander-in-Chief, had found, by Paccard's help, an innocent accomplice capable of playing the part of a gendarme in disguise, and had got himself up as a peace-officer. Three times in the coach he had thought of killing Peyrade, but he had made it a rule never to commit a murder with his own hand; he promised

himself that he would get rid of Peyrade all in good time by pointing him out as a millionaire to some released convicts about the town.

Peyrade and his Mentor, as they went in, heard Contenson's voice arguing with Madame du Val-Noble's maid. Peyrade signed to Carlos to remain in the outer room, with a look meant to convey: 'Thus you can assure yourself of my sincerity.'

'Madame agrees to everything,' said Adèle. 'Madame is at this moment calling on a friend, Madame de Champy, who has some rooms in the Rue Taitbout on her hands for a year, full of furniture, which she will let her have, no doubt. Madame can receive Mr. Johnson more suitably there, for the furniture is still very decent, and Monsieur might buy it for Madame by coming to an agreement with Madame de Champy.'

'Very good, my girl. If this is not a job of fleecing, it is a bit of the wool,' said the mulatto to the astonished woman. 'However, we will go shares——'

'That is your darkee all over!' cried Mademoiselle Adèle. If your nabob is a nabob, he can very well afford to give Madame the furniture. The lease ends in April 1830; your nabob may renew it if he likes.'

'I am quite willing,' said Peyrade, speaking French with a strong English accent, as he came in and tapped the woman on the shoulder.

He cast a knowing look back at Carlos, who replied by an assenting nod, understanding that the nabob was to keep up his part.

But the scene suddenly changed its aspect at the entrance of a person over whom neither Carlos nor Peyrade had the least power. Corentin suddenly came in. He had found the door open, and looked in as he went by to see how his old friend played his part as nabob.

'The Préfet is still bullying me!' said Peyrade in a whisper to Corentin. 'He has found me out as a nabob.'

'We will spill the Préfet,' Corentin muttered in reply.

Then after a cool bow he stood darkly scrutinising the magistrate.

'Stay here till I return,' said Carlos; 'I will go to the Préfecture. If you do not see me again, you may go your own way.'

Having said this in an undertone to Peyrade, so as not to humiliate him in the presence of the waiting-maid, Carlos went away, not caring to remain under the eye of the newcomer, in whom he detected one of those fair-haired, blue-eyed men, coldly terrifying.

'That is the peace-officer sent after me by the Préfet,' said Peyrade.

'That?' said Corentin. 'You have walked into a trap. That man has three packs of cards in his shoes; you can see that by the place of his foot in the shoe; besides, a peace-officer need wear no disguise.'

Corentin hurried downstairs to verify his suspicions: Carlos was getting into the fly.

'Hallo! Monsieur l'Abbé!' cried Corentin.

Carlos looked round, saw Corentin, and got in quickly. Still, Corentin had time to say—

'That was all I wanted to know.—Quai Malaquais,' he shouted to the driver with diabolical mockery in his tone and expression.

'I am done!' said Jacques Collin to himself. 'They have got me. I must get ahead of them by sheer pace, and, above all, find out what they want of us.'

Corentin had seen the Abbé Carlos Herrera five or six times, and the man's eyes were unforgettable. Corentin had suspected him at once from the cut of his shoulders, then by his puffy face, and the trick of three inches of added height gained by a heel inside the shoe.

'Ah! old fellow, they have drawn you,' said Corentin, finding no one in the room but Peyrade and Contenson.

'Who?' cried Peyrade, with metallic hardness; 'I

will spend my last days in putting him on a girdiron and turning him on it.'

'It is the Abbé Carlos Herrera, the Corentin of Spain, as I suppose. This explains everything. The Spaniard is a demon of the first water, who has tried to make a fortune for that little young man by coining money out of a pretty baggage's bolster.—It is your lookout if you think you can measure your skill with a man who seems to me the very devil to deal with.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Contenson, 'he fingered the three hundred thousand francs the day when Esther was arrested; he was in the cab. I remember those eyes, that brow, and those marks of the smallpox.'

'Oh! what a fortune my Lydie might have had!' cried Peyrade.

'You may still play the nabob,' said Corentin. 'To keep an eye on Esther you must keep up her intimacy with Val-Noble. She was really Lucien's mistress.'

'They have got more than five hundred thousand francs out of Nucingen already,' said Contenson.

'And they want as much again,' Corentin went on. 'The Rubempré estate is to cost a million.—Daddy,' added he, slapping Peyrade on the shoulder, 'you may get more than a hundred thousand francs to settle on Lydie.'

'Don't tell me that, Corentin. If your scheme should fail, I cannot tell what I might not do——'

'You will have it by to-morrow perhaps! The Abbé, my dear fellow, is most astute; we shall have to kiss his spurs; he is a very superior devil. But I have him sure enough. He is not a fool, and he will knock under. Try to be a gaby as well as a nabob, and fear nothing.'

In the evening of this day, when the opposing forces had met face to face on level ground, Lucien spent the

evening at the Hôtel Grandlieu. The party was a large one. In the face of all the assembly, the Duchess kept Lucien at her side for some time, and was most kind to him.

'You are going away for a little while?' said she.

'Yes, Madame la Duchesse. My sister, in her anxiety to promote my marriage, has made great sacrifices, and I have been enabled to repurchase the lands of the Rubemprés, to reconstitute the whole estate. But I have found in my Paris lawyer a very clever man, who has managed to save me from the extortionate terms that the holders would have asked if they had known the name of the purchaser.'

'Is there a château?' asked Clotilde, with too broad a smile.

'There is something which might be called a château; but the wiser plan would be to use the building materials in the construction of a modern residence.'

Clotilde's eyes blazed with happiness above her smile of satisfaction.

'You must play a rubber with my father this evening,' said she. 'In a fortnight I hope you will be asked to dinner.'

'Well, my dear sir,' said the Duc de Grandlieu, 'I am told that you have bought the estate of Rubempré. I congratulate you. It is an answer to those who say you are in debt. We bigwigs, like France or England, are allowed to have a public debt; but men of no fortune, beginners, you see, may not assume that privilege——'

'Indeed, Monsieur le Duc, I still owe five hundred thousand francs on my land.'

'Well, well, you must marry a wife who can bring you the money; but you will have some difficulty in finding a match with such a fortune in our Faubourg, where daughters do not get large dowries.'

'Their name is enough,' said Lucien.

'We are only three *wisk* players—Maufrigneuse,

d'Espard, and I—will you make the fourth?' said the Duke, pointing to the card-table.

Clotilde came to the table to watch her father's game.

'She expects me to believe that she means it for me,' said the Duke, patting his daughter's hands, and looking round at Lucien, who remained quite grave.

Lucien, Monsieur d'Espard's partner, lost twenty louis.

'My dear mother,' said Clotilde to the Duchess, 'he was so judicious as to lose.'

At eleven o'clock, after a few affectionate words with Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, Lucien went home and to bed, thinking of the complete triumph he was to enjoy a month hence; for he had not a doubt of being accepted as Clotilde's lover, and married before Lent in 1830.

On the morrow, when Lucien was smoking his cigarettes after breakfast, sitting with Carlos, who had become much depressed, M. de Saint-Estève was announced—what a touch of irony—who begged to see either the Abbé Carlos Herrera or Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré.

'Was he told downstairs that I had left Paris?' cried the Abbé.

'Yes, sir,' replied the groom.

'Well, then, you must see the man,' said he to Lucien. 'But do not say a single compromising word, do not let a sign of surprise escape you. It is the enemy.'

'You will overhear me,' said Lucien.

Carlos hid in the adjoining room, and through the crack of the door he saw Corentin, whom he recognised only by his voice, such powers of transformation did the great man possess. This time Corentin looked like an old paymaster-general.

'I have not the honour of being known to you, Monsieur,' Corentin began, 'but——'

'Excuse my interrupting you, Monsieur, but——'

'But the matter in point is your marriage to Made-

moiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu—which will never take place,' Corentin added eagerly.

Lucien sat down and made no reply.

'You are in the power of a man who is able and willing and ready to prove to the Duc de Grandlieu that the lands of Rubempré are to be paid for with the money that a fool has given your mistress, Mademoiselle Esther,' Corentin went on. 'It will be quite easy to find the minutes of the legal opinions in virtue of which Mademoiselle Esther was summoned; there are ways too of making d'Estourny speak. The very clever manœuvres employed against the Baron de Nucingen will be brought to light.

'As yet all can be arranged. Pay down a hundred thousand francs, and you will have peace.—All this is no concern of mine. I am only the agent of those who levy this blackmail; nothing more.'

Corentin might have talked for an hour; Lucien smoked his cigarette with an air of perfect indifference.

'Monsieur,' replied he, 'I do not want to know who you are, for men who undertake such jobs as these have no name—at any rate, in my vocabulary. I have allowed you to talk at your leisure; I am at home.—You seem to me not bereft of common sense; listen to my dilemma.'

There was a pause, during which Lucien met Corentin's cat-like eye fixed on him with a perfectly icy stare.

'Either you are building on facts that are absolutely false, and I need pay no heed to them,' said Lucien; 'or you are in the right; and in that case, by giving you a hundred thousand francs, I put you in a position to ask me for as many hundred thousand francs as your employer can find Saint-Estèves to ask for.

'However, to put an end, once for all, to your kind intervention, I would have you know that I, Lucien de Rubempré, fear no one. I have no part in the jobbery of which you speak. If the Grandlieus make difficulties,

there are other young ladies of very good family ready to be married. After all, it is no loss to me if I remain single, especially if, as you imagine, I deal in blank bills to such advantage.'

'If Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera——'

'Monsieur,' Lucien put in, 'the Abbé Herrera is at this moment on the way to Spain. He has nothing to do with my marriage, my interests are no concern of his. That remarkable statesman was good enough to assist me at one time with his advice, but he has reports to present to His Majesty the King of Spain; if you have anything to say to him, I recommend you to set out for Madrid.'

'Monsieur,' said Corentin plainly, 'you will never be Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu's husband.'

'So much the worse for her!' replied Lucien, impatiently pushing Corentin towards the door.

'You have fully considered the matter?' asked Corentin coldly.

'Monsieur, I do not recognise that you have any right either to meddle in my affairs, or to make me waste a cigarette,' said Lucien, throwing away his cigarette that had gone out.

'Good-day, Monsieur,' said Corentin. 'We shall not meet again.—But there will certainly be a moment in your life when you would give half your fortune to have called me back from these stairs.'

In answer to this threat, Carlos made as though he were cutting off a head.

'Now to business!' cried he, looking at Lucien, who was as white as ashes after this dreadful interview.

If among the small number of my readers who take an interest in the moral and philosophical side of this book there should be only one capable of believing that the Baron de Nucingen was happy, that one would prove how difficult it is to explain the heart of a courtesan by

any kind of physiological formula. Esther was resolved to make the poor millionaire pay dearly for what he called his day of triumph. And at the beginning of February 1830 the housewarming party had not yet been given in the 'little palace.'

'Well,' said Esther in confidence to her friends, who repeated it to the Baron, 'I shall open house at the Carnival, and I mean to make my man as happy as a cock in plaster.'

The phrase became proverbial among women of her kidney.

The Baron gave vent to much lamentation; like married men, he made himself very ridiculous, he began to complain to his intimate friends, and his dissatisfaction was generally known.

Esther, meanwhile, took quite a serious view of her position as the Pompadour of this prince of speculators. She had given two or three small evening parties, solely to get Lucien into the house. Lousteau, Rastignac, du Tillet, Bixiou, Nathan, the Comte de Brambourg—all the cream of the dissipated crew—frequented her drawing-room. And, as leading ladies in the piece she was playing, Esther accepted Tullia, Florentine, Fanny Beaupré, and Florine—two dancers and two actresses—besides Madame du Val-Noble. Nothing can be more dreary than a courtesan's home without the spice of rivalry, the display of dress, and some variety of type.

In six weeks Esther had become the wittiest, the most amusing, the loveliest, and the most elegant of those female pariahs who form the class of kept women. Placed on the pedestal that became her, she enjoyed all the delights of vanity which fascinate women in general, but still as one who is raised above her caste by a secret thought. She cherished in her heart an image of herself which she gloried in, while it made her blush; the hour when she must abdicate was ever present to her consciousness; thus she lived a double life, really scorning

herself. Her sarcastic remarks were tinged by the temper which was roused in her by the intense contempt felt by the Angel of Love, hidden in the courtesan, for the disgraceful and odious part played by the body in the presence, as it were, of the soul. At once actor and spectator, victim and judge, she was a living realisation of the beautiful Arabian Tales, in which a noble creature lies hidden under a degrading form, and of which the type is the story of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of books—the Bible. Having granted herself a lease of life till the day after her infidelity, the victim might surely play awhile with the executioner.

Moreover, the enlightenment that had come to Esther as to the secretly disgraceful means by which the Baron had made his colossal fortune relieved her of every scruple. She could play the part of Ate, the goddess of vengeance, as Carlos said. And so she was by turns enchanting and odious to the banker, who lived only for her. When the Baron had been worked up to such a pitch of suffering that he wanted only to be quit of Esther, she brought him round by a scene of tender affection.

Herrera, making a great show of starting for Spain, had gone as far as Tours. He had sent the chaise on as far as Bordeaux, with a servant inside, engaged to play the part of master, and to wait for him at Bordeaux. Then, returning by diligence, dressed as a commercial traveller, he had secretly taken up his abode under Esther's roof, and thence, aided by Asie and Europe, carefully directed all his machinations, keeping an eye on every one, and especially on Peyrade.

About a fortnight before the day chosen for her great entertainment, which was to be given in the evening after the first opera ball, the courtesan, whose witticisms were beginning to make her feared, happened to be at the Italian opera, at the back of a box which the Baron—forced to give a box—had secured in the lowest

tier, in order to conceal his mistress, and not to flaunt her in public within a few feet of Madame de Nucingen. Esther had taken her seat, so as to 'rake' that of Madame de Sérizy, whom Lucien almost invariably accompanied. The poor girl made her whole happiness centre in watching Lucien on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays by Madame de Sérizy's side.

At about half-past nine in the evening Esther could see Lucien enter the Countess's box, with a careladen brow, pale, and with almost drawn features. These symptoms of mental anguish were legible only to Esther. The knowledge of a man's countenance is, to the woman who loves him, like that of the sea to a sailor.

'Good God! what can be the matter? What has happened? Does he want to speak with that angel of hell, who is to him a guardian angel, and who lives hidden in an attic between those of Europe and Asie?'

Tormented by such reflections, Esther scarcely listened to the music. Still less, it may be believed, did she listen to the Baron, who held one of his 'Anchel's' hands in both his, talking to her in his horrible Polish-Jewish accent, a jargon which must be as unpleasant to read as it is to hear spoken.

'Esther,' said he, releasing her hand, and pushing it away with a slight touch of temper, 'you do not listen to me.'

'I tell you what, Baron, you blunder in love as you gibber in French.'

'*Der Teufel!*'

'I am not in my boudoir here, I am at the opera. If you were not a barrel made by Huret or Fichet, metamorphosed into a man by some trick of nature, you would not make so much noise in a box with a woman who is fond of music. I don't listen to you? I should think not! There you sit rustling my dress like a cockchafer in a paper-bag, and making me laugh with

contempt. You say to me, "You are so pretty, I should like to eat you!" Old simpleton! Supposing I were to say to you, "You are less intolerable this evening than you were yesterday—we will go home?"—Well, from the way you puff and sigh—for I feel you if I don't listen to you—I perceive that you have eaten an enormous dinner, and your digestion is at work. Let me instruct you—for I cost you enough to give some advice for your money now and then—let me tell you, my dear fellow, that a man whose digestion is so troublesome as yours is, is not justified in telling his mistress that she is pretty at unseemly hours. An old soldier died of that very folly "in the arms of Religion," as Blondet has it.

'It is now ten o'clock. You finished dinner at du Tillet's at nine o'clock, with your pigeon the Comte de Brambourg; you have millions and truffles to digest. Come to-morrow night at ten.'

'Vat you are cruel!' cried the Baron, recognising the profound truth of this medical argument.

'Cruel!' echoed Esther, still looking at Lucien. 'Have you not consulted Bianchon, Desplein, old Haudry?—Since you have had a glimpse of future happiness, do you know what you seem like to me?'

'No—vat?'

'A fat old fellow wrapped in flannel, who walks every hour from his armchair to the window to see if the thermometer has risen to the degree marked "*Silkworms*," the temperature prescribed by his physician.'

'You are really an ungrateful slut!' cried the Baron, in despair at hearing a tune, which, however, amorous old men not unfrequently hear at the opera.

'Ungrateful!' retorted Esther. 'What have you given me till now? A great deal of annoyance. Come, papa! Can I be proud of you? You! you are proud of me; I wear your livery and badge with an air. You paid my debts? So you did. But you have grabbed so

many millions—come, you need not sulk ; you admitted that to me—that you need not think twice of that. And this is your chief title to fame. A baggage and a thief—a well-assorted couple !

'You have built a splendid cage for a parrot that amuses you. Go and ask a Brazilian cockatoo what gratitude it owes to the man who placed it in a gilded cage.—Don't look at me like that ; you are just like a Buddhist Bonze.

'Well, you show your red-and-white cockatoo to all Paris. You say, "Does anybody else in Paris own such a parrot ? And how well it talks, how cleverly it picks its words !" If du Tillet comes in, it says at once, "How 'do, little swindler ?"—Why, you are as happy as a Dutchman who has grown an unique tulip, as an old nabob pensioned off in Asia by England, when a commercial traveller sells him the first Swiss snuff-box that opens in three places.

'You want to win my heart ? Well, now, I will tell you how to do it.'

'Speak, speak, dere is noting I shall not do for you. I lofe to be fooled by you.'

'Be young, be handsome, be like Lucien de Rubempré over there by your wife, and you shall have gratis what you can never buy with all your millions !'

'I shall go 'vay, for really you are too bat dis evening !' said the banker, with a lengthened face.

'Very well, good-night then,' said Esther. 'Tell Georches to make your pillows very high and place your feet low, for you look apoplectic this evening.—You cannot say, my dear, that I take no interest in your health.'

The Baron was standing up, and held the door-knob in his hand.

'Here, Nucingen,' said Esther, with an imperious gesture.

The Baron bent over her with dog-like devotion.

'Do you want to see me very sweet, and giving you sugar-and-water, and petting you in my house, this very evening, old monster?'

'You shall break my heart!'

'Break your heart—you mean bore you,' she went on. 'Well, bring me Lucien that I may invite him to our Belshazzar's feast, and you may be sure he will not fail to come. If you succeed in that little transaction, I will tell you that I love you, my fat Frédéric, in such plain terms that you cannot but believe me.'

'You are ein enchanteress,' said the Baron, kissing Esther's glove. 'I should be villing to listen to abuse for ein hour if alvays der vas a kiss at de ent of it.'

'But if I am not obeyed, I——' and she threatened the Baron with her finger as we threaten children.

The Baron raised his head like a bird caught in a springe and imploring the trapper's pity.

'Dear Heaven! What ails Lucien?' said she to herself when she was alone, making no attempt to check her falling tears; 'I never saw him so sad.'

This is what had happened to Lucien that very evening.

At nine o'clock he had gone out, as he did every evening, in his brougham to go to the Hôtel de Grandlieu. Using his saddle-horse and cab in the morning only, like all young men, he had hired a brougham for winter evenings, and had chosen a first-class carriage and splendid horses from one of the best job-masters. For the last month all had gone well with him; he had dined with the Grandlieus three times; the Duke was delightful to him; his shares in the Omnibus Company, sold for three hundred thousand francs, had paid off a third more of the price of the land; Clotilde de Grandlieu, who dressed beautifully now, reddened inch thick when he went into the room, and loudly proclaimed her attachment to him. Some personages of high estate

discussed their marriage as a probable event. The Duc de Chaulieu, formerly Ambassador to Spain, and for a short while Minister for Foreign Affairs, had promised the Duchesse de Grandlieu that he would ask for the title of Marquis for Lucien.

So that evening, after dining with Madame de Sérizy, Lucien had driven to the Faubourg Saint-Germain to pay his daily visit.

He arrives, the coachman calls for the gate to be opened, he drives into the courtyard and stops at the steps. Lucien, on getting out, remarks four other carriages in waiting. On seeing Monsieur de Rubempré, one of the footmen placed to open and shut the hall-door comes forward and out on to the steps, in front of the door, like a soldier on guard.

'His Grace is not at home,' says he.

'Madame la Duchesse is receiving company,' observes Lucien to the servant.

'Madame la Duchesse is gone out,' replies the man solemnly.

'Mademoiselle Clotilde——'

'I do not think that Mademoiselle Clotilde will see you, Monsieur, in the absence of Madame la Duchesse.'

'But there are people here,' replies Lucien in dismay.

'I do not know, sir,' says the man, trying to seem stupid and to be respectful.

There is nothing more fatal than etiquette to those who regard it as the most formidable arm of social law. Lucien easily interpreted the meaning of this scene, so disastrous to him. The Duke and Duchess would not admit him. He felt the spinal marrow freezing in the core of his vertebral column, and a sickly cold sweat bedewed his brow. The conversation had taken place in the presence of his own body-servant, who held the door of the brougham, doubting whether to shut it. Lucien signed to him that he was going away again; but as he stepped into the carriage, he heard the noise of

people coming downstairs, and the servant called out first, 'Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu's people,' then 'Madame la Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's carriage!'

Lucien merely said, 'To the Italian opera'; but in spite of his haste, the luckless dandy could not escape the Duc de Chaulieu and his son, the Duc de Rhétoré, to whom he was obliged to bow, for they did not speak a word to him. A great catastrophe at Court, the fall of a formidable favourite, has ere now been pronounced on the threshold of a royal study, in one word from an usher with a face like a plaster cast.

'How am I to let my adviser know of this disaster—this instant——?' thought Lucien as he drove to the opera-house. 'What is going on?'

He racked his brain with conjectures.

This was what had taken place. That morning, at eleven o'clock, the Duc de Grandlieu, as he went into the little room where the family all breakfasted together, said to Clotilde after kissing her, 'Until further orders, my child, think no more of the 'Sieur de Rubempré.'

Then he had taken the Duchess by the hand, and led her into a window recess to say a few words in an undertone, which made poor Clotilde turn pale; for she watched her mother as she listened to the Duke, and saw her expression of extreme surprise.

'Jean,' said the Duke to one of the servants, 'take this note to Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu, and beg him to answer by you, Yes or No.—I am asking him to dine here to-day,' he added to his wife.

Breakfast had been a most melancholy meal. The Duchess was meditative, the Duke seemed to be vexed with himself, and Clotilde could with difficulty restrain her tears.

'My child, your father is right; you must obey him,' the mother had said to the daughter with much emotion. 'I do not say as he does, "Think no more of Lucien." No—for I understand your suffering'—Clotilde kissed

her mother's hand—'but I do say, my darling, Wait, take no step, suffer in silence since you love him, and put your trust in your parents' care.—Great ladies, my child, are great just because they can do their duty on every occasion, and do it nobly.'

'But what is it about?' asked Clotilde as white as a lily.

'Matters too serious to be discussed with you, my dearest,' the Duchess replied. 'For if they are untrue, your mind would be unnecessarily sullied; and if they are true, you must never know them.'

At six o'clock the Duc de Chaulieu had come to join the Duc de Grandlieu, who awaited him in his study.

'Tell me, Henri'—for the Dukes were on the most familiar terms, and addressed each other by their Christian names. This is one of the shades invented to mark a degree of intimacy, to repel the audacity of French familiarity, and humiliate conceit—'tell me, Henri, I am in such a desperate difficulty that I can only ask advice of an old friend who understands business, and you have practice and experience. My daughter Clotilde, as you know, is in love with that little Rubempré, whom I have been almost compelled to accept as her promised husband. I have always been averse to the marriage; however, Madame de Grandlieu could not bear to thwart Clotilde's passion. When the young fellow had repurchased the family estate and paid three-quarters of the price, I could make no further objections.

'But last evening I received an anonymous letter—you know how much that is worth—in which I am informed that the young fellow's fortune is derived from some disreputable source, and that he is telling lies when he says that his sister is giving him the necessary funds for his purchase. For my daughter's happiness, and for the sake of our family, I am adjured to make inquiries, and the means of doing so are suggested to me. Here, read it.'

'I am entirely of your opinion as to the value of anonymous letters, my dear Ferdinand,' said the Duc de Chaulieu after reading the letter. 'Still, though we may contemn them, we must make use of them. We must treat such letters as we would treat a spy. Keep the young man out of the house, and let us make inquiries——

'I know how to do it. Your lawyer is Derville, a man in whom we have perfect confidence; he knows the secrets of many families, and can certainly be trusted with this. He is an honest man, a man of weight, and a man of honour; he is cunning and wily; but his wiliness is only in the way of business, and you need only employ him to obtain evidence you can depend upon.

'We have in the Foreign Office an agent of the superior police who is unique in his power of discovering State secrets; we often send him on such missions. Inform Derville that he will have a lieutenant in the case. Our spy is a gentleman who will appear wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, and looking like a diplomate. This rascal will do the hunting; Derville will only look on. Your lawyer will then tell you if the mountain brings forth a mouse, or if you must throw over this little Rubempré. Within a week you will know what you are doing.'

'The young man is not yet so far a Marquis as to take offence at my being "Not at home" for a week,' said the Duc de Grandlieu.

'Above all, if you end by giving him your daughter,' replied the Minister. 'If the anonymous letter tells the truth, what of that? You can send Clotilde to travel with my daughter-in-law Madeleine, who wants to go to Italy.'

'You relieve me immensely. I don't yet know whether I ought to thank you.'

'Wait till the end.'

'By the way,' exclaimed the Duc de Grandlieu, 'what is your man's name? I must mention it to Derville. Send him to me to-morrow by five o'clock; I will have Derville here and put them in communication.'

'His real name,' said M. de Chaulieu, 'is, I think, Corentin—a name you must never have heard, for my gentleman will come ticketed with his official name. He calls himself Monsieur de Saint-Something—Saint-Yves—Saint-Valère?—Something of the kind.—You may trust him; Louis XVIII. had perfect confidence in him.'

After this confabulation the steward had orders to shut the door on Monsieur de Rubempré—which was done.

Lucien paced the waiting-room at the opera-house like a man who was drunk. He fancied himself the talk of all Paris. He had in the Duc de Rhétoré one of those unrelenting enemies on whom a man must smile, as he can never be revenged, since their attacks are in conformity with the rules of society. The Duc de Rhétoré knew the scene that had just taken place on the outside steps of the Grandlieus' house. Lucien, feeling the necessity of at once reporting the catastrophe to his high privy councillor, nevertheless was afraid of compromising himself by going to Esther's house, where he might find company. He actually forgot that Esther was here, so confused were his thoughts, and in the midst of so much perplexity he was obliged to make small talk with Rastignac, who, knowing nothing of the news, congratulated him on his approaching marriage.

At this moment Nucingen appeared smiling, and said to Lucien—

'Vill you do me de pleasure to come to see Montame de Champy, vat vill infite you herself to von house-varming party——'

'With pleasure, Baron,' replied Lucien, to whom the Baron appeared as a rescuing angel.

'Leave us,' said Esther to Monsieur de Nucingen,

when she saw him come in with Lucien. 'Go and see Madame du Val-Noble, whom I discover in a box on the third tier with her nabob.—A great many nabobs grow in the Indies,' she added, with a knowing glance at Lucien.

'And that one,' said Lucien, smiling, 'is uncommonly like yours.'

'And then,' said Esther, answering Lucien with another look of intelligence, while still speaking to the Baron, 'bring her here with her nabob; he is very anxious to make your acquaintance. They say he is very rich. The poor woman has already poured out I know not how many elegies; she complains that her nabob is no good; and if you relieve him of his ballast, perhaps he will sail closer to the wind.'

'You tink ve are all tieves!' said the Baron as he went away.

'What ails you, my Lucien?' asked Esther in her friend's ear, just touching it with her lips as soon as the box door was shut.

'I am lost! I have just been turned from the door of the Hôtel de Grandlieu under pretence that no one was admitted. The Duke and Duchess were at home, and five pairs of horses were champing in the courtyard.'

'What! will the marriage not take place?' exclaimed Esther, much agitated, for she saw a glimpse of Paradise.

'I do not yet know what is being plotted against me——'

'My Lucien,' said she in a deliciously coaxing voice, 'why be worried about it? You can make a better match by and by—I will get you the price of two estates——'

'Give us supper to-night that I may be able to speak in secret to Carlos, and, above all, invite the sham Englishman and Val-Noble. That nabob is my ruin; he is our enemy; we will get hold of him, and we——'

But Lucien broke off with a gesture of despair.

'Well, what is it?' asked the poor girl.

'Oh! Madame de Sérizy sees me!' cried Lucien, and to crown our woes, the Duc de Rhétoré, who witnessed my dismissal, is with her.'

In fact, at that very minute, the Duc de Rhétoré was amusing himself with Madame de Sérizy's discomfiture.

'Do you allow Lucien to be seen in Mademoiselle Esther's box?' said the young Duke, pointing to the box and to Lucien; 'you, who take an interest in him, should really tell him such things are not allowed. He may sup at her house, he may even— But, in fact, I am no longer surprised at the Grandlieus' coolness towards the young man. I have just seen their door shut in his face —on the front steps——'

'Women of that sort are very dangerous,' said Madame de Sérizy, turning her opera-glass on Esther's box.

'Yes,' said the Duke, 'as much by what they can do as by what they wish——'

'They will ruin him!' cried Madame de Sérizy, 'for I am told they cost as much whether they are paid or no.'

'Not to him!' said the young Duke, affecting surprise. 'They are far from costing him anything; they give him money at need, and all run after him.'

The Countess's lips showed a little nervous twitching which could not be included in any category of smiles.

'Well, then,' said Esther, 'come to supper at midnight. Bring Blondet and Rastignac; let us have two amusing persons at any rate, and we won't be more than nine.'

'You must find some excuse for sending the Baron to fetch Eugénie under pretence of warning Asie, and tell her what has befallen me, so that Carlos may know before he has the nabob under his claws.'

'That shall be done,' said Esther.

And thus Peyrade was probably about to find himself unwittingly under the same roof with his adversary. The tiger was coming into the lion's den, and a lion surrounded by his guards.

When Lucien went back to Madame de Sérizy's box, instead of turning to him, smiling and arranging her skirts for him to sit by her, she affected to pay him not the slightest attention, but looked about the house through her glass. Lucien could see, however, by the shaking of her hand that the Countess was suffering from one of those terrible emotions by which illicit joys are paid for. He went to the front of the box all the same, and sat down by her at the opposite corner, leaving a little vacant space between himself and the Countess. He leaned on the ledge of the box with his elbow, resting his chin on his gloved hand; then he half turned away, waiting for a word. By the middle of the act the Countess had still neither spoken to him nor looked at him.

'I do not know,' said she at last, 'why you are here; your place is in Mademoiselle Esther's box——'

'I will go there,' said Lucien, leaving the box without looking at the Countess.

'My dear,' said Madame du Val-Noble, going into Esther's box with Peyrade, whom the Baron de Nucingen did not recognise, 'I am delighted to introduce Mr. Samuel Johnson. He is a great admirer of M. de Nucingen's talents.'

'Indeed, Monsieur,' said Esther, smiling at Peyrade.

'Oh yes, *bocou*,' said Peyrade.

'Why, Baron, here is a way of speaking French which is as much like yours as the low Breton dialect is like that of Burgundy. It will be most amusing to hear you discuss money matters.—Do you know, Monsieur Nabob, what I shall require of you if you are to make acquaintance with my Baron?' said Esther with a smile.

'Oh!—Thank you so much, you will introduce me to

Sir Baronet?' said Peyrade with an extravagant English accent.

'Yes,' said she, 'you must give me the pleasure of your company at supper. There is no pitch stronger than champagne for sticking men together. It seals every kind of business, above all such as you put your foot in.—Come this evening; you will find some jolly fellows.—As for you, my little Frédéric,' she added in the Baron's ear, 'you have your carriage here—just drive to the Rue Saint-Georges and bring Europe to me here; I have two words to say to her about the supper. I have caught Lucien; he will bring two men who will be fun.—We will draw the Englishman,' she whispered to Madame du Val-Noble.

Peyrade and the Baron left the women together.

'Oh, my dear, if you ever succeed in drawing that great brute, you will be clever indeed,' said Suzanne.

'If it proves impossible, you must lend him to me for a week,' replied Esther, laughing.

'You would but keep him half a day,' replied Madame du Val-Noble. 'The bread I eat is too hard; it breaks my teeth. Never again, to my dying day, will I try to make an Englishman happy. They are all cold and selfish—pigs on their hind legs.'

'What, no consideration?' said Esther with a smile.

'On the contrary, my dear, the monster has never shown the least familiarity.'

'Under no circumstances whatever?' asked Esther.

'The wretch always addresses me as Madame, and preserves the most perfect coolness imaginable at moments when every man is more or less amenable. To him love-making!—on my word, it is nothing more nor less than shaving himself. He wipes the razor, puts it back in its case, and looks in the glass as if he were saying, "I have not cut myself!"

'Then he treats me with such respect as is enough to send a woman mad. That odious Milord Potboiler

amuses himself by making poor Théodore hide in my dressing-room and stand there half the day. In short, he tries to annoy me in every way. And as stingy!—As miserly as Gobseck and Gigonnet rolled into one. He takes me out to dinner, but he does not pay the cab that brings me home if I happen not to have ordered my carriage to fetch me.'

'Well,' said Esther, 'but what does he pay you for your services?'

'Oh, my dear, positively nothing. Five hundred francs a month and not a penny more, and the hire of a carriage. But what is it? A machine such as they hire out for a third-rate wedding to carry an *épicier* to the Mairie, to Church, and to the Cadran bleu.—Oh, he nettles me with his respect.

'If I try hysterics and feel ill, he is never vexed; he only says: "I wish my lady to have her own way, for there is nothing more detestable—no gentleman—than to say to a nice woman, 'You are a cotton bale, a bundle of merchandise.'—Ha, hah! Are you a member of the Temperance Society and anti-slavery?" And my horror sits pale, and cold, and hard, while he gives me to understand that he has as much respect for me as he might have for a negro, and that it has nothing to do with his feelings, but with his opinions as an abolitionist.'

'A man cannot be a worse wretch,' said Esther. 'But I will smash up that outlandish Chinee.'

'Smash him up?' replied Madame du Val-Noble. 'Not if he does not love me. You, yourself, would you like to ask him for two sous? He would listen to you solemnly, and tell you, with British precision that would make a slap in the face seem genial, that he pays dear enough for the trifle that love can be to his poor life;' and, as before, Madame du Val-Noble mimicked Peyrade's bad French.

'To think that in our line of life we are thrown in the way of such men!' exclaimed Esther.

'Oh, my dear, you have been uncommonly lucky. Take good care of your Nucingen.'

'But your nabob must have got some idea in his head.'

'That is what Adèle says.'

'Look here, my dear; that man, you may depend, has laid a bet that he will make a woman hate him and pack him off in a certain time.'

'Or else he wants to do business with Nucingen, and took me up knowing that you and I were friends; that is what Adèle thinks,' answered Madame du Val-Noble. 'That is why I introduced him to you this evening. Oh, if only I could be sure what he is at, what tricks I could play him with you and Nucingen!'

'And you don't get angry?' asked Esther; 'you don't speak your mind now and then?'

'Try it—you are sharp and smooth.—Well, in spite of your sweetness, he would kill you with his icy smiles. "I am anti-slavery," he would say, "and you are free." —If you said the funniest things, he would only look at you and say, "Very good!" and you would see that he regards you merely as part of the show.'

'And if you turned furious?'

'The same thing; it would still be a show. You might cut him open under the left breast without hurting him in the least; his internals are of tinned-iron, I am sure. I told him so. He replied, "I am quite satisfied with that physical constitution."'

'And always polite. My dear, he wears gloves on his soul . . .

'I shall endure this martyrdom a few days longer to satisfy my curiosity. But for that, I should have made Philippe slap my lord's cheek—and he has not his match as a swordsman. There is nothing else left for it——'

'I was just going to say so,' cried Esther. 'But you must ascertain first that Philippe is a boxer; for

these old English fellows, my dear, have a depth of malignity——'

'This one has no match on earth. No, if you could but see him asking my commands, to know at what hour he may come—to take me by surprise, of course—and pouring out respectful speeches like a so-called gentleman, you would say, "Why, he adores her!" and there is not a woman in the world who would not say the same.'

'And they envy us, my dear!' exclaimed Esther.

'Ah, well!' sighed Madame du Val-Noble; 'in the course of our lives we learn more or less how little men value us. But, my dear, I have never been so cruelly, so deeply, so utterly scorned by brutality as I am by this great skinful of port wine.

'When he is tipsy he goes away—"not to be unpleasant," as he tells Adèle, and not to be "under two powers at once," wine and woman. He takes advantage of my carriage; he uses it more than I do.—Oh! if only we could see him under the table to-night! But he can drink ten bottles and only be fuddled; when his eyes are full, he still sees clearly.'

'Like people whose windows are dirty outside,' said Esther, 'but who can see from inside what is going on in the street.—I know that property in man. Du Tillet has it in the highest degree.'

'Try to get du Tillet, and if he and Nucingen between them could only catch him in some of their plots, I should at least be revenged. They would bring him to beggary!

'Oh! my dear, to have fallen into the hands of a hypocritical Protestant after that poor Falleix, who was so amusing, so good-natured, so full of chaff! How we used to laugh! They say all stockbrokers are stupid. Well, he, for one, never lacked wit but once——'

'When he left you without a sou? That is what made you acquainted with the unpleasant side of pleasure.'

Europe, brought in by Monsieur de Nucingen, put her viperine head in at the door, and after listening to a few words whispered in her ear by her mistress, she vanished.

At half-past eleven that evening, five carriages were stationed in the Rue Saint-Georges before the famous courtesan's door. There was Lucien's, who had brought Rastignac, Bixiou, and Blondet; du Tillet's, the Baron de Nucingen's, the Nabob's, and Florine's—she was invited by du Tillet. The closed and doubly-shuttered windows were screened by the splendid Chinese silk curtains. Supper was to be served at one; wax-lights were blazing, the dining-room and little drawing-room displayed all their magnificence. The party looked forward to such an orgy as only three such women and such men as these could survive. They began by playing cards, as they had to wait about two hours.

'Do you play, Milord?' said du Tillet to Peyrade.

'I have played with O'Connell, Pitt, Fox, Canning, Lord Brougham, Lord——'

'Say at once no end of lords,' said Bixiou.

'Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Hertford, Lord——'

Bixiou was looking at Peyrade's shoes, and stooped down.

'What are you looking for?' asked Blondet.

'For the spring one must touch to stop this machine,' said Florine.

'Do you play for twenty francs a point?'

'I will play for as much as you like to lose.'

'He does it well!' said Esther to Lucien. 'They all take him for an Englishman.'

Du Tillet, Nucingen, Peyrade, and Rastignac sat down to a whist-table; Florine, Madame du Val-Noble, Esther, Blondet, and Bixiou sat round the fire chatting. Lucien spent the time in looking through a book of fine engravings.

'Supper is ready,' Paccard presently announced, in magnificent livery.

Peyrade was placed at Florine's left hand, and on the other side of him Bixiou, whom Esther had enjoined to make the Englishman drink freely, and challenge him to beat him. Bixiou had the power of drinking an indefinite quantity.

Never in his life had Peyrade seen such splendour, or tasted of such cookery, or seen such fine women.

'I am getting my money's worth this evening for the thousand crowns la Val-Noble has cost me till now,' thought he; 'and besides, I have just won a thousand francs.'

'This is an example for men to follow!' said Suzanne, who was sitting by Lucien, with a wave of her hand at the splendours of the dining-room.

Esther had placed Lucien next herself, and was holding his foot between her own under the table.

'Do you hear?' said Madame du Val-Noble, addressing Peyrade, who affected blindness. 'This is how you ought to furnish a house! When a man brings millions home from India, and wants to do business with the Nucingens, he should place himself on the same level.'

'I belong to a Temperance Society!'

'Then you will drink like a fish!' said Bixiou, 'for the Indies are uncommon hot, uncle!'

It was Bixiou's jest during supper to treat Peyrade as an uncle of his, returned from India.

'Montame du Fal-Noble tolt me you shall have some iteas,' said Nucingen, scrutinising Peyrade.

'Ah, this is what I wanted to hear,' said du Tillet to Rastignac; 'the two talking gibberish together.'

'You will see, they will understand each other at last,' said Bixiou, guessing what du Tillet had said to Rastignac.

'Sir Baronet, I have imagined a speculation—oh! a very comfortable job—*bocou profitable* and rich in profits——'

'Now you will see,' said Blondet to du Tillet, 'he will not talk one minute without dragging in the Parliament and the English Government.'

'It is in China, in the opium trade——'

'Ja, I know,' said Nucingen at once, as a man who is well acquainted with commercial geography. 'But de English Gover'ment hafe taken up de opium trate as a means dat shall open up China, and she shall not allow dat ve——'

'Nucingen has cut him out with the Government,' remarked du Tillet to Blondet.

'Ah! you have been in the opium trade!' cried Madame du Val-Noble. 'Now I understand why you are so narcotic; some has stuck in your soul.'

'Dere! you see!' cried the Baron to the self-styled opium merchant, and pointing to Madame du Val-Noble. 'You are like me. Never shall a millionaire be able to make a voman lofe him.'

'I have loved much and often, milady,' replied Peyrade.

'As a result of temperance,' said Bixiou, who had just seen Peyrade finish his third bottle of claret, and now had a bottle of port wine uncorked.

'Oh!' cried Peyrade, 'it is very fine, the Portugal of England.'

Blondet, du Tillet, and Bixiou smiled at each other. Peyrade had the power of travestying everything, even his wit. There are very few Englishmen who will not maintain that gold and silver are better in England than elsewhere. The fowls and eggs exported from Normandy to the London market enable the English to maintain that the poultry and eggs in London are superior (*very fine*) to those of Paris, which come from the same district.

Esther and Lucien were dumbfounded by this perfection of costume, language, and audacity.

They all ate and drank so well and so heartily, while

talking and laughing, that it went on till four in the morning. Bixiou flattered himself that he had achieved one of the victories so pleasantly related by Brillat-Savarin. But at the moment when he was saying to himself, as he offered his 'uncle' some more wine, 'I have vanquished England!' Peyrade replied in good French to this malicious scoffer, '*Toujours*, *mon garçon*' (Go it, my boy), which no one heard but Bixiou.

'Hallo, good men all, he is as English as I am!—My uncle is a Gascon! I could have no other!'

Bixiou and Peyrade were alone, so no one heard this announcement. Peyrade rolled off his chair on to the floor. Paccard forthwith picked him up and carried him to an attic, where he fell sound asleep.

At six o'clock next evening, the Nabob was roused by the application of a wet cloth, with which his face was being washed, and awoke to find himself on a camp-bed, face to face with Asie, wearing a mask and a black domino.

'Well, Papa Peyrade, you and I have to settle accounts,' said she.

'Where am I?' asked he, looking about him.

'Listen to me,' said Asie, 'and that will sober you.—Though you do not love Madame du Val-Noble, you love your daughter, I suppose?'

'My daughter?' Peyrade echoed with a roar.

'Yes, Mademoiselle Lydie.'

'What then?'

'What then? She is no longer in the Rue des Moineaux; she has been carried off.'

Peyrade breathed a sigh like that of a soldier dying of a mortal wound on the battlefield.

'While you were pretending to be an Englishman, some one else was pretending to be Peyrade. Your little Lydie thought she was with her father, and she is now in a safe place.—Oh! you will never find her! unless you undo the mischief you have done.'

'What mischief?'

'Yesterday Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré had the door shut in his face at the Duc de Grandlieu's. This is due to your intrigues, and to the man you let loose on us. Do not speak, listen!' Asie went on, seeing Peyrade open his mouth. 'You will have your daughter again, pure and spotless,' she added, emphasising her statement by the accent on every word, 'only on the day after that on which Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré walks out of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin as the husband of Mademoiselle Clotilde. If, within ten days, Lucien de Rubempré is not admitted, as he has been, to the Grandlieus' house, you, to begin with, will die a violent death, and nothing can save you from the fate that threatens you.—Then, when you feel yourself dying, you will have time before breathing your last to reflect, "My daughter is a prostitute for the rest of her life!"

'Though you have been such a fool as give us this hold for our clutches, you still have sense enough to meditate on this ultimatum from our government. Do not bark, say nothing to any one; go to Contenson's, and change your dress, and then go home. Katt will tell you that at a word from you your little Lydie went downstairs, and has not been seen since. If you make any fuss, if you take any steps, your daughter will begin where I tell you she will end—she is promised to de Marsay.

'With old Canquoëlle I need not mince matters, I should think, or wear gloves, heh?—— Go on downstairs, and take care not to meddle in our concerns any more.'

Asie left Peyrade in a pitiable state; every word had been a blow with a club. The spy had tears in his eyes, and tears hanging from his cheeks at the end of a wet furrow.

'They are waiting dinner for Mr. Johnson,' said Europe, putting her head in a moment after.

Peyrade made no reply; he went down, walked till he

reached a cab-stand, and hurried off to undress at Contenson's, not saying a word to him; he resumed the costume of Père Canquoëlle, and got home by eight o'clock. He mounted the stairs with a beating heart. When the Flemish woman heard her master, she asked him—

'Well, and where is Mademoiselle?' with such simplicity, that the old spy was obliged to lean against the wall. The blow was more than he could bear. He went into his daughter's rooms, and ended by fainting with grief when he found them empty, and heard Katt's story, which was that of an abduction as skilfully planned as if he had arranged it himself.

'Well, well,' thought he, 'I must knock under. I will be revenged later; now I must go to Corentin.—This is the first time we have met our foes. Corentin will leave that handsome boy free to marry an Empress if he wishes!—Yes, I understand that my little girl should have fallen in love with him at first sight.—Oh! that Spanish priest is a knowing one. Courage, friend Peyrade! disgorge your prey!'

The poor father never dreamed of the fearful blow that awaited him.

On reaching Corentin's house, Bruno, the confidential servant, who knew Peyrade, said—

'Monsieur is gone away.'

'For a long time?'

'For ten days.'

'Where?'

'I don't know.'

'Good God, I am losing my wits! I ask him where—as if we ever told them——' thought he.

A few hours before the moment when Peyrade was to be roused in his garret in the Rue Saint-Georges, Corentin, coming in from his country place at Passy, had made his way to the Duc de Grandlieu's, in the

costume of a retainer of a superior class. He wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honour at his button-hole. He had made up a withered old face with powdered hair, deep wrinkles, and a colourless skin. His eyes were hidden by tortoiseshell spectacles. He looked like a retired office-clerk. On giving his name as Monsieur de Saint-Denis, he was led to the Duke's private room, where he found Derville reading a letter, which he himself had dictated to one of his agents, the 'number' whose business it was to write documents. The Duke took Corentin aside to tell him all he already knew. Monsieur de Saint-Denis listened coldly and respectfully, amusing himself by studying this grand gentleman, by penetrating to the tufa beneath the velvet cover, by scrutinising this being, now and always absorbed in whist and in regard for the House of Grandlieu.

Such fine gentlemen are so guileless with their inferiors that Corentin had only to lay few questions humbly before Monsieur de Grandlieu to bring out his impertinence.

'If you will take my advice, Monsieur,' said Corentin to Derville, after being duly introduced to the lawyer, 'we shall set out this very afternoon for Angoulême by the Bordeaux coach, which goes quite as fast as the mail; and we shall not need to stay there six hours to obtain the information Monsieur le Duc requires. It will be enough—if I have understood your Grace—to ascertain whether Monsieur de Rubempré's sister and brother-in-law are in a position to give him twelve hundred thousand francs?' and he turned to the Duke.

'You have understood me perfectly,' said the Duke.

'We can be back again in four days,' Corentin went on, addressing Derville, 'and neither of us will have neglected his business long enough for it to suffer.'

'That was the only difficulty I was about to mention to his Grace,' said Derville. 'It is now four o'clock. I am going home to say a word to my head-clerk, and

pack my travelling-bag, and after dinner, at eight o'clock, I will be—— But shall we get places?' he said to Monsieur de Saint-Denis, interrupting himself.

'I will answer for that,' said Corentin. 'Be in the yard of the Chief Office of the Messageries at eight o'clock. If there are no places, they shall make some, for that is the way to serve Monseigneur le Duc de Grandlieu.'

'Gentlemen,' said the Duke most graciously, 'I postpone my thanks——'

Corentin and the lawyer, taking this as a dismissal, bowed, and withdrew.

At the hour when Peyrade was questioning Corentin's servant, Monsieur de Saint-Denis and Derville, seated in the Bordeaux coach, were studying each other in silence as they drove out of Paris.

Next morning, between Orleans and Tours, Derville, being bored, began to converse, and Corentin condescended to amuse him, but keeping his distance; he left him to believe that he was in the diplomatic service, and was hoping to become Consul-General by the good offices of the Duc de Grandlieu. Two days after leaving Paris, Corentin and Derville got out at Mansle, to the great surprise of the lawyer, who thought he was going to Angoulême.

'In this little town,' said Corentin, 'we can get the most positive information as regards Madame Séchard.'

'Do you know her then?' asked Derville, astonished to find Corentin so well informed.

'I made the conductor talk, finding he was a native of Angoulême. He tells me that Madame Séchard lives at Marsac, and Marsac is but a league away from Mansle. I thought we should be at greater advantage here than at Angoulême for verifying the facts.'

'And besides,' thought Derville, 'as Monsieur le Duc said, I act merely as the witness to the inquiries made by this confidential agent——'

The inn at Mansle, *la Belle Étoile*, had for its landlord one of those fat and burly men whom we fear we may find no more on our return; but who still, ten years after, are seen standing at their door with as much superfluous flesh as ever, in the same linen cap, the same apron, with the same knife, the same oiled hair, the same triple chin,—all stereotyped by novel-writers from the immortal Cervantes to the immortal Walter Scott. Are they not all boastful of their cookery? have they not all 'whatever you please to order'? and do they not all end by giving you the same hectic chicken, and vegetables cooked with rank butter? They all boast of their fine wines, and all make you drink the wine of the country.

But Corentin, from his earliest youth, had known the art of getting out of an innkeeper things more essential to himself than doubtful dishes and apocryphal wines. So he gave himself out as a man easy to please, and willing to leave himself in the hands of the best cook in Mansle, as he told the fat man.

'There is no difficulty about being the best—I am the only one,' said the host.

'Serve us in the sideroom,' said Corentin, winking at Derville. 'And do not be afraid of setting the chimney on fire; we want to thaw out the frost in our fingers.'

'It was not warm in the coach,' said Derville.

'Is it far to Marsac?' asked Corentin of the innkeeper's wife, who came down from the upper regions on hearing that the *diligence* had dropped two travellers to sleep there.

'Are you going to Marsac, Monsieur?' replied the woman.

'I don't know,' he said sharply. 'Is it far from hence to Marsac?' he repeated, after giving the woman time to notice his red-ribbon.

'In a chaise, a matter of half an hour,' said the innkeeper's wife.

'Do you think that Monsieur and Madame Séchard are likely to be there in winter?'

'To be sure; they live there all the year round.'

'It is now five o'clock. We shall still find them up at nine.'

'Oh yes, till ten. They have company every evening—the curé, Monsieur Marron the doctor——'

'Good folks then?' said Derville.

'Oh, the best of good souls,' replied the woman, 'straightforward, honest—and not ambitious neither. Monsieur Séchard, though he is very well off—they say he might have made millions if he had not allowed himself to be robbed of an invention in the paper-making of which the brothers Cointet are getting the benefit——'

'Ah, to be sure, the Brothers Cointet!' said Corentin.

'Hold your tongue,' said the innkeeper. 'What can it matter to these gentlemen whether Monsieur Séchard has a right or no to a patent for his invention in paper-making?—If you mean to spend the night here—at the *Belle Étoile*——' he went on, addressing the travellers, 'here is the book, and please to put your names down. We have an officer in this town who has nothing to do, and spends all his time in nagging at us——'

'The devil!' said Corentin, while Derville entered their names and his profession as attorney to the lower Court in the department of the Seine, 'I fancied the Séchards were very rich.'

'Some people say they are millionaires,' replied the innkeeper. 'But as to hindering tongues from wagging, you might as well try to stop the river from flowing. Old Séchard left two hundred thousand francs worth of landed property, it is said; and that is not amiss for a man who began as a workman. Well, and he may have had as much again in savings, for he made ten or twelve thousand francs out of his land at last. So, supposing he were fool enough not to invest his money for ten years, that would be all told. But even if he lent it at high

interest, as he is suspected of doing, there would be three hundred thousand francs perhaps, and that is all. Five hundred thousand francs is a long way short of a million. I should be quite content with the difference, and no more of the *Belle Etoile* for me!'

'Really!' said Corentin. 'Then Monsieur David Séchard and his wife have not a fortune of two or three millions?'

'Why,' exclaimed the innkeeper's wife, 'that is what the Cointets are supposed to have, who robbed him of his invention, and he does not get more than twenty thousand francs out of them. Where do you suppose such honest folks would find millions? They were very much pinched while the father was alive. But for Kolb, their manager, and Madame Kolb, who is as much attached to them as her husband, they could scarcely have lived. Why, how much had they with La Verberie?—A thousand francs a year perhaps.'

Corentin drew Derville aside and said—

'*In vino veritas!* Truth lives under a cork. For my part, I regard an inn as the real registry office of the countryside; the notary is not better informed than the innkeeper as to all that goes on in a small neighbourhood.—You see! we are supposed to know all about the Cointets and Kolb and the rest.

'Your innkeeper is the living record of every incident; he does the work of the police without suspecting it. A government should maintain two hundred spies at most, for in a country like France there are ten millions of simple-minded informers.—However, we need not trust to this report; though even in this little town something would be known about the twelve hundred thousand francs sunk in paying for the Rubempré estate. We will not stop here long——'

'I hope not!' Derville put in.

'And this is why,' added Corentin; 'I have hit on the most natural way of extracting the truth from the mouth

of the Séchard couple. I rely upon you to support, by your authority as a lawyer, the little trick I shall employ to enable you to hear a clear and complete account of their affairs.—After dinner we shall set out to call on Monsieur Séchard,' said Corentin to the innkeeper's wife. 'Have beds ready for us; we want separate rooms. There can be no difficulty "under the stars."'

'Oh, Monsieur,' said the woman, 'we invented the sign.'

'The pun is to be found in every department,' said Corentin; 'it is no monopoly of yours.'

'Dinner is served, gentlemen,' said the innkeeper.

'But where the devil can that young fellow have found the money? Is the anonymous writer accurate? Can it be the earnings of some handsome baggage?' said Derville, as they sat down to dinner.

'Ah, that will be the subject of another inquiry,' said Corentin. 'Lucien de Rubempré, as the Duc de Chaulieu tells me, lives with a converted Jewess, who passes for a Dutch woman, and is called Esther van Bogseck.'

'What a strange coincidence!' said the lawyer. 'I am hunting for the heiress of a Dutchman named Gobseck—it is the same name with a transposition of consonants.'

'Well,' said Corentin, 'you shall have information as to her parentage on my return to Paris.'

An hour after, the two agents for the Grandlieu family set out for La Verberie, where Monsieur and Madame Séchard were living.

Never had Lucien felt any emotion so deep as that which overcame him at La Verberie when comparing his own fate with that of his brother-in-law. The two Parisians were about to witness the same scene that had so much struck Lucien a few days since. Everything spoke of peace and abundance.

At the hour when the two strangers were arriving,

a party of four persons were being entertained in the drawing-room of La Verberie: the curé of Marsac, a young priest of five-and-twenty, who, at Madame Séchard's request, had become tutor to her little boy Lucien; the country doctor, Monsieur Marron; the Maire of the commune; and an old colonel, who grew roses on a plot of land opposite to La Verberie on the other side of the road. Every evening during the winter these persons came to play an artless game of boston for centime points, to borrow the papers, or return those they had finished.

When Monsieur and Madame Séchard had bought La Verberie, a fine house built of stone, and roofed with slate, the pleasure-grounds consisted of a garden of two acres. In the course of time, by devoting her savings to the purpose, handsome Madame Séchard had extended her garden as far as a brook, by cutting down the vines on some ground she purchased, and replacing them with grass plots and clumps of shrubbery. At the present time the house, surrounded by a park of about twenty acres, and enclosed by walls, was considered the most imposing place in the neighbourhood.

Old Séchard's former residence, with the outhouses attached, was now used as the dwelling-house for the manager of about twenty acres of vineyard left by him, of five farm-steads, bringing in about six thousand francs a year, and ten acres of meadow land lying on the further side of the stream, exactly opposite the little park; indeed, Madame Séchard hoped to include them in it the next year. La Verberie was already spoken of in the neighbourhood as a château, and Eve Séchard was known as the Lady of Marsac. Lucien, while flattering her vanity, had only followed the example of the peasants and vine-dressers. Courtois, the owner of a mill, very picturesquely situated a few hundred yards from the meadows of La Verberie, was in treaty, it was said, with Madame Séchard for the sale of his property; and this

acquisition would give the finishing touch to the estate and the rank of a 'Place' in the department.

Madame Séchard, who did a great deal of good, with as much judgment as generosity, was equally esteemed and loved. Her beauty, now really splendid, was at the height of its bloom. She was about six-and-twenty, but had preserved all the freshness of youth from living in the tranquillity and abundance of a country life. Still much in love with her husband, she respected him as a clever man, who was modest enough to renounce the display of fame; in short, to complete her portrait, it is enough to say that in her whole existence she had never felt a throb of her heart that was not inspired by her husband or her children.

The tax paid to grief by this happy household was, as may be supposed, the deep anxiety caused by Lucien's career, in which Eve Séchard suspected mysteries, which she dreaded all the more because, during his last visit, Lucien roughly cut short all his sister's questions by saying that an ambitious man owed no account of his proceedings to any one but himself.

In six years Lucien had seen his sister but three times, and had not written her more than six letters. His first visit to La Verberie had been on the occasion of his mother's death; and his last had been paid with a view to asking the favour of the lie which was so necessary to his advancement. This gave rise to a very serious scene between Monsieur and Madame Séchard and their brother, and left their happy and respected life troubled by the most terrible suspicions.

The interior of the house, as much altered as the surroundings, was comfortable without luxury, as will be understood by a glance round the room where the little party were now assembled. A pretty Aubusson carpet, hangings of grey cotton twill bound with green silk braid, the woodwork painted to imitate Spa wood, carved mahogany furniture covered with grey woollen

stuff and green gimp, with flower-stands, gay with flowers in spite of the time of year, presented a very pleasing and homelike aspect. The window curtains, of green brocade, the chimney ornaments, and the mirror frames were untainted by the bad taste that spoils everything in the provinces; and the smallest details, all elegant and appropriate, gave the mind and eye a sense of repose and of the poetry which a clever and loving woman can and ought to infuse into her home.

Madame Séchard, still in mourning for her father, sat by the fire working at some large piece of tapestry with the help of Madame Kolb, the housekeeper, to whom she intrusted all the minor cares of the household.

Just as the hackney chaise reached the first houses of Marsac, the usual party at La Verberie received the addition of Courtois the miller, a widower, who was anxious to retire from business, and who hoped to sell his property well, since Madame Eve was eager to have it—Courtois knew why.

'A chaise has stopped at the door!' said Courtois, hearing the sound of wheels outside; 'and to judge by the clatter of metal, it belongs to these parts——'

'Postel and his wife have come to see us, no doubt,' said the doctor.

'No,' said Courtois, 'the chaise has come from Mansle.'

'Montame,' said Kolb, the burly Alsatian we have made acquaintance with in a former volume (*Illusions perdues*), 'here is a lawyer from Paris who wants to speak with Monsieur.'

'A lawyer!' cried Séchard; 'the very word gives me the colic!'

'Thank you!' said the Maire of Marsac, named Cachan, who for twenty years had been an attorney at Angoulême, and who had once been required to prosecute Séchard.

'My poor David will never improve; he will always be absent-minded!' said Eve, smiling.

'A lawyer from Paris,' said Courtois. 'Have you any business in Paris?'

'No,' said Eve.

'But you have a brother there,' observed Courtois.

'Take care lest he should have anything to say about old Séchard's estate,' said Cachan. '*He* had his finger in some very queer concerns, worthy man!'

Corentin and Derville, on entering the room, after bowing to the company and giving their names, begged to have a private interview with Monsieur and Madame Séchard.

'By all means,' said Séchard. 'But is it a matter of business?'

'Solely a matter regarding your father's property,' said Corentin.

'Then I beg you will allow Monsieur—the Maire, a lawyer formerly at Angoulême—to be present also.'

'Are you Monsieur Derville?' said Cachan, addressing Corentin.

'No, Monsieur, this is Monsieur Derville,' replied Corentin, introducing the lawyer, who bowed.

'But,' said Séchard, 'we are, so to speak, a family party; we have no secrets from our neighbours; there is no need to retire to my study, where there is no fire—our life is in the sight of all men——'

'But your father's,' said Corentin, 'was involved in certain mysteries which perhaps you would rather not make public.'

'Is it anything that we need blush for?' said Eve, in alarm.

'Oh, no! a sin of his youth,' said Corentin, coldly setting one of his mouse-traps. 'Monsieur, your father left an elder son——'

'Oh, the old rascal!' cried Courtois. 'He was never very fond of you, Monsieur Séchard, and he kept that

secret from you, the deep old dog!—Now I understand what he meant when he used to say to me, "You shall see what you shall see when I am under the turf!"'

'Do not be dismayed, Monsieur,' said Corentin to Séchard, while he watched Eve out of the corner of his eye.

'A brother!' exclaimed the doctor. 'Then your inheritance is divided into two!'

Derville was affecting to examine the fine engravings, proofs before letters, which hung on the drawing-room walls.

'Do not be dismayed, Madame,' Corentin went on, seeing amazement written on Madame Séchard's handsome features, 'it is only a natural son. The rights of a natural son are not the same as those of a legitimate child. This man is in the depths of poverty, and he has a right to a certain sum calculated on the amount of the estate. The millions left by your father——'

At the word millions there was a perfectly unanimous cry from all the persons present. And now Derville ceased to study the prints.

'Old Séchard?—Millions?' said Courtois. 'Who on earth told you that? Some peasant——'

'Monsieur,' said Cachan, 'you are not attached to the Treasury? You may be told all the facts——'

'Be quite easy,' said Corentin, 'I give you my word of honour I am not employed by the Treasury.'

Cachan, who had just signed to everybody to say nothing, gave expression to his satisfaction.

'Monsieur,' Corentin went on, 'if the whole estate were but a million, a natural child's share would still be something considerable. But we have not come to threaten a lawsuit; on the contrary, our purpose is to propose that you should hand over one hundred thousand francs, and we will depart——'

'One hundred thousand francs!' cried Cachan, in-

terrupting him. 'But, Monsieur, old Séchard left twenty acres of vineyard, five small farms, ten acres of meadowland here, and not a sou besides——'

'Nothing on earth,' cried David Séchard, 'would induce me to tell a lie, and less on a question of money than on any other.—Monsieur,' he said, turning to Corentin and Derville, 'my father left us, besides the land——'

Courtois and Cachan signalled in vain to Séchard; he went on—

'Three hundred thousand francs, which raises the whole estate to about five hundred thousand francs.'

'Monsieur Cachan,' asked Eve Séchard, 'what proportion does the law allot to a natural child?'

'Madame,' said Corentin, 'we are not Turks; we only require you to swear before these gentlemen that you did not inherit more than five hundred thousand francs from your father-in-law, and we can come to an understanding.'

'First give me your word of honour that you really are a lawyer,' said Cachan to Derville.

'Here is my passport,' replied Derville, handing him a paper folded in four; 'and Monsieur is not, as you might suppose, an inspector from the Treasury, so be easy,' he added. 'We had an important reason for wanting to know the truth as to the Séchard estate, and we now know it.'

Derville took Madame Séchard's hand and led her very courteously to the further end of the room.

'Madame,' said he, in a low voice, 'if it were not that the honour and future prospects of the house of Grandlieu are implicated in this affair, I would never have lent myself to the stratagem devised by this gentleman of the red ribbon. But you must forgive him; it was necessary to detect the falsehood by means of which your brother has stolen a march on the beliefs of that ancient family. Beware now of allowing it to be supposed that you have

given your brother twelve hundred thousand francs to repurchase the Rubempré estates——'

'Twelve hundred thousand francs!' cried Madame Séchard, turning pale. 'Where did he get them, wretched boy?'

'Ah! that is the question,' replied Derville. 'I fear that the source of his wealth is far from pure.'

The tears rose to Eve's eyes, as her neighbours could see.

'We have, perhaps, done you a great service by saving you from abetting a falsehood of which the results may be positively dangerous,' the lawyer went on.

Derville left Madame Séchard sitting pale and dejected with tears on her cheeks, and bowed to the company.

'To Mansle!' said Corentin to the little boy who drove the chaise.

There was but one vacant place in the diligence from Bordeaux to Paris; Derville begged Corentin to allow him to take it, urging a press of business; but in his soul he was distrustful of his travelling companion, whose diplomatic dexterity and coolness struck him as being the result of practice. Corentin remained three days longer at Mansle, unable to get away; he was obliged to secure a place in the Paris coach by writing to Bordeaux, and did not get back till nine days after leaving home.

Peyrade, meanwhile, had called every morning, either at Passy or in Paris, to inquire whether Corentin had returned. On the eighth day he left at each house a note, written in their peculiar cypher, to explain to his friend what death hung over him, and to tell him of Lydie's abduction and the horrible end to which his enemies had devoted them. Peyrade, bereft of Corentin, but seconded by Contenson, still kept up his disguise as a nabob. Even though his invisible foes had discovered him, he very wisely reflected that he might glean some light on the matter by remaining on the field of the contest.

Contenson had brought all his experience into play in his search for Lydie, and hoped to discover in what house she was hidden; but as the days went by, the impossibility, absolutely demonstrated, of tracing the slightest clue, added, hour by hour, to Peyrade's despair. The old spy had a sort of guard about him of twelve or fifteen of the most experienced detectives. They watched the neighbourhood of the Rue des Moineaux and the Rue Taitbout—where he lived, as a nabob, with Madame du Val-Noble. During the last three days of the term granted by Asie to reinstate Lucien on his old footing in the Hôtel de Grandlieu, Contenson never left the veteran of the old general police office. And the poetic terror shed throughout the forests of America by the arts of inimical and warring tribes, of which Cooper made such good use in his novels, was here associated with the petty details of Paris life. The foot-passengers, the shops, the hackney cabs, a figure standing at a window,—everything had to the human cyphers to whom old Peyrade had intrusted his safety the thrilling interest which attaches in Cooper's romances to a beaver-village, a rock, a bison-robe, a floating canoe, a weed straggling over the water.

'If the Spaniard is gone away, you have nothing to fear,' said Contenson to Peyrade, remarking on the perfect peace they lived in.

'But if he is not gone?' observed Peyrade.

'He took one of my men at the back of the chaise; but at Blois, my man having to get down, could not catch the chaise up again.'

Five days after Derville's return, Lucien one morning had a call from Rastignac.

'I am in despair, my dear boy,' said his visitor, 'at finding myself compelled to deliver a message which is intrusted to me because we are known to be intimate. Your marriage is broken off beyond all hope of recon-

ciliation. Never set foot again in the Hôtel de Grandlieu. To marry Clotilde you must wait till her father dies, and he is too selfish to die yet a while. Old whist-players sit at table—the card-table—very late.

'Clotilde is setting out for Italy with Madeleine de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu. The poor girl is so madly in love with you, my dear fellow, that they have to keep an eye on her; she was bent on coming to see you, and had plotted an escape. That may comfort you in misfortune!'

Lucien made no reply; he sat gazing at Rastignac.

'And is it a misfortune, after all?' his friend went on. 'You will easily find a girl as well born and better looking than Clotilde! Madame de Sérizy will find you a wife out of spite; she cannot endure the Grandlieus, who never would have anything to say to her. She has a niece, little Clémence du Rouvre——'

'My dear boy,' said Lucien at length, 'since that supper I am not on terms with Madame de Sérizy—she saw me in Esther's box, and made a scene—and I left her to herself.'

'A woman of forty does not long keep up a quarrel with so handsome a man as you are,' said Rastignac. 'I know something of these sunsets.—It lasts ten minutes in the sky, and ten years in a woman's heart.'

'I have waited a week to hear from her.'

'Go and call.'

'Yes, I must now.'

'Are you coming at any rate to the Val-Noble's? Her nabob is returning the supper given by Nucingen.'

'I am asked, and I shall go,' said Lucien gravely.

The day after this confirmation of his disaster, which Carlos heard of at once from Asie, Lucien went to the Rue Taitbout with Rastignac and Nucingen.

At midnight nearly all the personages of this drama were assembled in the dining-room that had formerly been Esther's—a drama of which the interest lay hidden

under the very bed of these tumultuous lives, and was known only to Esther, to Lucien, to Peyrade, to Contenso, the mulatto, and to Paccard, who attended his mistress. Asie, without its being known to Contenson and Peyrade, had been asked by Madame du Val-Noble to come and help her cook.

As they sat down to table, Peyrade, who had given Madame du Val-Noble five hundred francs that the thing might be well done, found under his napkin a scrap of paper on which these words were written in pencil, 'The ten days are up at the moment when you sit down to supper.'

Peyrade handed the paper to Contenson, who was standing behind him, saying in English—

'Did you put my name here?'

Contenson read by the light of the wax-candles this '*Mene*, *Tekel*, *Upharsin*,' and slipped the scrap into his pocket; but he knew how difficult it is to verify a handwriting in pencil, and, above all, a sentence written in Roman capitals, that is to say, with mathematical lines, since capital letters are wholly made up of straight lines and curves, in which it is impossible to detect any trick of the hand, as in what is called running-hand.

The supper was absolutely devoid of spirit. Peyrade was visibly absent-minded. Of the men about town who give life to a supper, only Rastignac and Lucien were present. Lucien was gloomy and absorbed in thought; Rastignac, who had lost two thousand francs before supper, ate and drank with the hope of recovering them later. The three women, stricken by this chill, looked at each other. Dulness deprived the dishes of all relish. Suppers, like plays and books, have their good and bad luck.

At the end of the meal ices were served, of the kind called *plombières*. As everybody knows, this kind of dessert has delicate preserved fruits laid on the top of the ice, which is served in a little glass, not heaped above

the rim. These ices had been ordered by Madame du Val-Noble of Tortoni, whose famous shop is at the corner of the Rue Taitbout and the Boulevard.

The cook called Contenson out of the room to pay the bill.

Contenson, who thought this demand on the part of the shop-boy rather strange, went downstairs and startled him by saying—

'Then you have not come from Tortoni's?' and then went straight upstairs again.

Paccard had meanwhile handed the ices to the company in his absence. The mulatto had hardly reached the door when one of the police constables who had kept watch in the Rue des Moineaux called up the stairs—

'Number twenty-seven.'

'What 's up?' replied Contenson, flying down again.

'Tell Papa that his daughter has come home; but, good God! in what a state. Tell him to come at once; she is dying.'

At the moment when Contenson re-entered the dining-room, old Peyrade, who had drunk a great deal, was swallowing the cherry off his ice. They were drinking to the health of Madame du Val-Noble; the nabob filled his glass with Constantia and emptied it.

In spite of his distress at the news he had to give Peyrade, Contenson was struck by the eager attention with which Paccard was looking at the nabob. His eyes sparkled like two fixed flames. Although it seemed important, still this could not delay the mulatto, who leaned over his master, just as Peyrade set his glass down.

'Lydie is at home,' said Contenson, 'in a very sad state.'

Peyrade rattled out the most French of all French oaths with such a strong Southern accent that all the guests looked up in amazement. Peyrade, discovering

his blunder, acknowledged his disguise by saying to Contenson in good French—

'Find me a coach—I 'm off.'

Every one rose.

'Why, who are you?' said Lucien.

'Ja—who?' said the Baron.

'Bixiou told me you shammed Englishman better than he could, and I would not believe him,' said Rastignac.

'Some bankrupt caught in disguise,' said du Tillet loudly. 'I suspected as much!'

'A strange place is Paris!' said Madame du Val-Noble. 'After being bankrupt in his own part of the town, a merchant turns up as a nabob or a dandy in the Champs-Elysées with impunity!—Oh! I am unlucky! bankrupts are my bane.'

'Every flower has its peculiar blight!' said Esther quietly. 'Mine is like Cleopatra's—an asp.'

'Who am I?' echoed Peyrade from the door. 'You will know ere long; for if I die, I will rise from my grave to clutch your feet every night!'

He looked at Esther and Lucien as he spoke, then he took advantage of the general dismay to vanish with the utmost rapidity, meaning to run home without waiting for the coach. In the street the spy was gripped by the arm as he crossed the threshold of the outer gate. It was Asie, wrapped in a black hood such as ladies then wore on leaving a ball.

'Send for the Sacraments, Papa Peyrade,' said she, in the voice that had already prophesied ill.

A coach was waiting. Asie jumped in, and the carriage vanished as though the wind had swept it away. There were five carriages waiting; Peyrade's men could find out nothing.

On reaching his house in the Rue des Vignes, one of the quietest and prettiest nooks of the little town of Passy,



Corentin, who was known there as a retired merchant passionately devoted to gardening, found his friend Peyrade's note in cypher. Instead of resting, he got into the hackney coach that had brought him thither, and was driven to the Rue des Moineaux, where he found only Katt. From her he heard of Lydie's disappearance, and remained astounded at Peyrade's and his own want of foresight.

'But they do not know me yet,' said he to himself. 'This crew is capable of anything; I must find out if they are killing Peyrade; for if so, I must not be seen any more——'

The viler a man's life is, the more he clings to it; it becomes at every moment a protest and a revenge.

Corentin went back to the cab, and drove to his rooms to assume the disguise of a feeble old man, in a scanty greenish overcoat and a tow wig. Then he returned on foot, prompted by his friendship for Peyrade. He intended to give instructions to his most devoted and cleverest underlings.

As he went along the Rue Saint-Honoré to reach the Rue Saint-Roch from the Place Vendôme, he came up behind a girl in slippers, and dressed as a woman dresses for the night. She had on a white bed-jacket and a nightcap, and from time to time gave vent to a sob and an involuntary groan. Corentin out-paced her, and turning round, recognised Lydie.

'I am a friend of your father's, of Monsieur Canquoëlle's,' said he in his natural voice.

'Ah! then here is some one I can trust!' said she.

'Do not seem to have recognised me,' Corentin went on, 'for we are pursued by relentless foes, and are obliged to disguise ourselves. But tell me what has befallen you?'

'Oh, Monsieur,' said the poor child, 'the facts but not the story can be told—I am ruined, lost, and I do not know how——'

'Where have you come from?'

'I don't know, Monsieur. I fled with such precipitancy, I have come through so many streets, round so many turnings, fancying I was being followed. And when I met any one that seemed decent, I asked my way to get back to the Boulevards, so as to find the Rue de la Paix. And at last, after walking—— What o'clock is it, Monsieur?'

'Half-past eleven,' said Corentin.

'I escaped at nightfall,' said Lydie. 'I have been walking for five hours.'

'Well, come along; you can rest now; you will find your good Katt.'

'Oh, Monsieur, there is no rest for me! I only want to rest in the grave, and I will go and wait for death in a convent if I am worthy to be admitted——'

'Poor little girl!—But you struggled?'

'Oh yes! Oh! if you could only imagine the abject creatures they placed me with——!'

'They sent you to sleep, no doubt?'

'Ah! that is it!' cried poor Lydie. 'A little more strength and I should be at home. I feel I am dropping, and my brain is not quite clear.—Just now I fancied I was in a garden——'

Corentin took Lydie in his arms, and she lost consciousness; he carried her upstairs.

'Katt!' he called.

Katt came out with exclamations of joy.

'Don't be in too great a hurry to be glad!' said Corentin gravely; 'the girl is very ill.'

When Lydie was laid on her bed and recognised her own room by the light of two candles that Katt lighted, she became delirious. She sang scraps of pretty airs, broken by vociferations of horrible sentences she had heard. Her pretty face was mottled with purple patches. She mixed up the reminiscences of her pure childhood with those of these ten days of infamy. Katt sat weep-

ing; Corentin paced the room, stopping now and again to gaze at Lydie.

'She is paying her father's debt,' said he. 'Is there a Providence above? Oh, I was wise not to have a family. On my word of honour, a child is indeed a hostage given to misfortune, as some philosopher has said.'

'Oh!' cried the poor child, sitting up in bed and throwing back her fine long hair, 'instead of lying here, Katt, I ought to be stretched in the sand at the bottom of the Seine!'

'Katt, instead of crying and looking at your child, which will never cure her, you ought to go for a doctor; the medical officer in the first instance, and then Monsieur Desplein and Monsieur Bianchon—— We must save this innocent creature.'

And Corentin wrote down the addresses of these two famous physicians.

At this moment, up the stairs came some one to whom they were familiar, and the door was opened. Peyrade, in a violent sweat, his face purple, his eyes almost blood-stained, and gasping like a dolphin, rushed from the outer door to Lydie's room, exclaiming—

'Where is my child?'

He saw a melancholy sign from Corentin, and his eyes followed his friend's hand. Lydie's condition can only be compared to that of a flower tenderly cherished by a gardener, now fallen from its stem, and crushed by the iron-clamped shoes of some peasant. Ascribe this simile to a father's heart, and you will understand the blow that fell on Peyrade; the tears started to his eyes.

'You are crying!—It is my father!' said the girl.

She could still recognise her father; she got out of bed and fell on her knees at the old man's side as he sank into a chair.

'Forgive me, papa,' said she in a tone that pierced Peyrade's heart, and at the same moment he was conscious of what felt like a tremendous blow on his head.

'I am dying!—the villains!' were his last words.

Corentin tried to help his friend, and received his latest breath.

'Dead! Poisoned!' said he to himself. 'Ah! here is the doctor!' he exclaimed, hearing the sound of wheels.

Contenson, who came with his mulatto disguise removed, stood like a bronze statue as he heard Lydie say—

'Then you do not forgive me, father?—But it was not my fault!'

She did not understand that her father was dead.

'Oh, how he stares at me!' cried the poor crazy girl.

'We must close his eyes,' said Corentin, lifting Peyrade on to the bed.

'We are doing a stupid thing,' said Corentin. 'Let us carry him into his own room. His daughter is half demented, and she will go quite mad when she sees that he is dead; she will fancy that she has killed him.'

Lydie, seeing them carry away her father, looked quite stupefied.

'There lies my only friend!' said Corentin, seeming much moved when Peyrade was laid out on the bed in his own room. 'In all his life he never had but one impulse of cupidity, and that was for his daughter!—Let him be an example to you, Contenson. Every line of life has its code of honour. Peyrade did wrong when he mixed himself up with private concerns; we have no business to meddle with any but public cases.

'But come what may, I swear,' said he with a voice, an emphasis, a look that struck horror into Contenson, 'to avenge my poor Peyrade! I will discover the men who are guilty of his death and of his daughter's ruin. And as sure as I am myself, as I have yet a few days to live, which I will risk to accomplish that vengeance, every man of them shall die at four o'clock, in good health, by a clean shave on the Place de Grève.'

'And I will help you,' said Contenson with feeling.

Nothing, in fact, is more heart-stirring than the spectacle of passion in a cold, self-contained, and methodical man, in whom, for twenty years, no one has ever detected the smallest impulse of sentiment. It is like a molten bar of iron which melts everything it touches. And Contenson was moved to his depths.

'Poor old Canquoëlle!' said he, looking at Corentin. 'He has treated me many a time.—And, I tell you, only your bad sort know how to do such things—but often has he given me ten francs to go and gamble with . . .'

After this funeral oration, Peyrade's two avengers went back to Lydie's room, hearing Katt and the medical officer from the Mairie on the stairs.

'Go and fetch the Chief of the Police,' said Corentin. 'The public prosecutor will not find grounds for a prosecution in the case; still, we will report it to the Préfecture; it may, perhaps, be of some use.

'Monsieur,' he went on to the medical officer, 'in this room you will see a dead man. I do not believe that he died from natural causes; you will be good enough to make a *post-mortem* in the presence of the Chief of the Police, who will come at my request. Try to discover some traces of poison. You will, in a few minutes, have the opinion of Monsieur Desplein and Monsieur Bianchon, for whom I have sent to examine the daughter of my best friend; she is in a worse plight than he, though he is dead.'

'I have no need of those gentlemen's assistance in the exercise of my duty,' said the medical officer.

'Well, well,' thought Corentin. 'Let us have no clashing, Monsieur,' he said. 'In two words I give you my opinion—Those who have just murdered the father have also ruined the daughter.'

By daylight Lydie had yielded to fatigue; when the great surgeon and the young physician arrived she was asleep.

The doctor, whose duty it was to sign the death

certificate, had now opened Peyrade's body, and was seeking the cause of death.

'While waiting for your patient to awake,' said Corentin to the two famous doctors, 'would you join one of your professional brethren in an examination which cannot fail to interest you, and your opinion will be valuable in case of an inquiry.'

'Your relation died of apoplexy,' said the official. 'There are all the symptoms of violent congestion of the brain.'

'Examine him, gentlemen, and see if there is no poison capable of producing similar symptoms.'

'The stomach is, in fact, full of food substances; but short of chemical analysis, I find no evidence of poison.

'If the characters of cerebral congestion are well ascertained, we have here, considering the patient's age, a sufficient cause of death,' observed Desplein, looking at the enormous mass of material.

'Did he sup here?' asked Bianchon.

'No,' said Corentin; 'he came here in great haste from the Boulevard, and found his daughter ruined——'

'That was the poison if he loved his daughter,' said Bianchon.

'What known poison could produce a similar effect?' asked Corentin, clinging to his idea.

'There is but one,' said Desplein, after a careful examination. 'It is a poison found in the Malayan Archipelago, and derived from trees, as yet but little known, of the *strychnos* family; it is used to poison that dangerous weapon, the Malay kris.—At least, so it is reported.'

The Police Commissioner presently arrived; Corentin told him his suspicions, and begged him to draw up a report, telling him where and with whom Peyrade had supped, and the causes of the state in which he found Lydie.

Corentin then went to Lydie's rooms; Desplein and

Bianchon had been examining the poor child. He met them at the door.

'Well, gentlemen?' asked Corentin.

'Place the girl under medical care; unless she recovers her wits when her child is born—if indeed she should have a child—she will end her days melancholy-mad. There is no hope of a cure but in the maternal instinct, if it can be aroused.'

Corentin paid each of the physicians forty francs in gold, and then turned to the Police Commissioner, who had pulled him by the sleeve.

'The medical officer insists on it that death was natural,' said this functionary, 'and I can hardly report the case, especially as the dead man was old Canquoëlle; he had his finger in too many pies, and we should not be sure whom we might run foul of. Men like that die to order very often——'

'And my name is Corentin,' said Corentin in the man's ear.

The Commissioner started with surprise.

'So just make a note of all this,' Corentin went on; 'it will be very useful by and by; send it up only as confidential information. The crime cannot be proved, and I know that any inquiry would be checked at the very outset.—But I will catch the criminals some day yet. I will watch them and take them red-handed.'

The police official bowed to Corentin and left.

'Monsieur,' said Katt, 'Mademoiselle does nothing but dance and sing. What can I do?'

'Has any change occurred then?'

'She has understood that her father is just dead.'

'Put her into a hackney coach, and simply take her to Charenton; I will write a note to the Commissioner-General of Police to secure her being suitably provided for.—The daughter in Charenton, the father in a pauper's grave!' said Corentin.—'Contenson, go and

fetch the parish hearse.—And now, Don Carlos Herrera, you and I will fight it out!'

'Carlos?' said Contenson; 'he is in Spain.'

'He is in Paris,' said Corentin positively. 'There is a touch of Spanish genius of the Philip II. type in all this; but I have pitfalls for everybody, even for kings.'

Five days after the nabob's disappearance, Madame du Val-Noble was sitting by Esther's bedside weeping, for she felt herself on one of the slopes down to poverty.

'If only I had at least a hundred louis a year! With that sum, my dear, a woman can retire to some little town and find a husband——'

'I can get you as much as that,' said Esther.

'How?' cried Madame du Val-Noble.

'Oh, in a very simple way. Listen. You must want to kill yourself; play your part well. Send for Asie and offer her ten thousand francs for two black beads of very thin glass containing a poison which kills you in a second. Bring them to me, and I will give you fifty thousand francs for them.'

'Why do you not ask her for them yourself?' said her friend.

'Asie would not sell them to me.'

'They are not for yourself?' said Madame du Val-Noble.

'Perhaps.'

'You! who live in the midst of pleasure and luxury, in a house of your own? And on the eve of an entertainment which will be the talk of Paris for ten years—which is to cost Nucingen twenty thousand francs! There are to be strawberries in mid-February, they say, asparagus, grapes, melons!—And a thousand crowns' worth of flowers in the rooms.'

'What are you talking about? There are a thousand crowns' worth of roses on the stairs alone.'

'And your gown is said to have cost ten thousand francs?'

'Yes, it is of Brussels point, and Delphine, his wife, is furious. But I had a fancy to be disguised as a bride.'

'Where are the ten thousand francs?' asked Madame du Val-Noble.

'It is all the ready money I have,' said Esther, smiling. 'Open my table drawer; it is under the curl-papers.'

'People who talk of dying never kill themselves,' said Madame du Val-Noble. 'If it were to commit——'

'A crime? For shame!' said Esther, finishing her friend's thought, as she hesitated. 'Be quite easy, I have no intention of killing anybody. I had a friend—a very happy woman; she is dead, I must follow her—that is all.'

'How foolish!'

'How can I help it? I promised her I would.'

'I should let that bill go dishonoured,' said her friend, smiling.

'Do as I tell you, and go at once. I hear a carriage coming. It is Nucingen, a man who will go mad with joy! Yes, he loves me!—Why do we not love those who love us, for indeed they do all they can to please us?'

'Ah, that is the question!' said Madame du Val-Noble. 'It is the old story of the herring, which is the most puzzling fish that swims.'

'Why?'

'Well, no one could ever find out.'

'Get along, my dear!—I must ask for your fifty thousand francs.'

'Good-bye then.'

For three days past, Esther's ways with the Baron de Nucingen had completely changed. The monkey had become a cat, the cat had become a woman. Esther poured out treasures of affection on the old man; she was quite charming. Her way of addressing him, with a total

absence of mischief or bitterness, and all sorts of tender insinuation, had carried conviction to the banker's slow wit; she called him Fritz, and he believed that she loved him.

'My poor Fritz, I have tried you sorely,' said she. 'I have teased you shamefully. Your patience has been sublime. You loved me, I see, and I will reward you. I like you now; I do not know how it is, but I should prefer you to a young man. It is the result of experience perhaps.—In the long run we discover at last that pleasure is the coin of the soul; and it is not more flattering to be loved for the sake of pleasure than it is to be loved for the sake of money.

'Besides, young men are too selfish; they think more of themselves than of us; while you, now, think only of me. I am all your life to you. And I will take nothing more from you. I want to prove to you how disinterested I am.'

'Vy, I hafe gifen you notink,' cried the Baron, enchanted. 'I propose to gife you to-morrow tirty tousant francs a year in a Government bond.—Dat is mein vedding gift.'

Esther kissed the Baron so sweetly that he turned pale without any pills.

'Oh!' cried she, 'do not suppose that I am sweet to you only for your thirty thousand francs! It is because —now—I love you, my good, fat Frédéric.'

'Ach, mein Gott! Vy hafe you kept me vaiting? I might hafe been so happy all dese tree monts.'

'In three or in five per cents., my pet?' said Esther, passing her fingers through Nucingen's hair, and arranging it in a fashion of her own.

'In trees—I hat a quantity.'

So next morning the Baron brought the certificate of shares; he came to breakfast with his dear little girl, and to take her orders for the following evening, the famous Saturday, the great day!

'Here, my little vife, my only vife,' said the banker gleefully, his face radiant with happiness. 'Here is enough money to pay for your keep for de rest of your days.'

Esther took the paper without the slightest excitement, folded it up, and put it in her dressing-table drawer.

'So now you are quite happy, you monster of iniquity!' said she, giving Nucingen a little slap on the cheek, 'now that I have at last accepted a present from you. I can no longer tell you home-truths, for I share the fruit of what you call your labours. This is not a gift, my poor old boy, it is restitution.—Come, do not put on your Bourse face. You know that I love you.'

'My lofely Esther, mein anchel of lofe,' said the banker, 'do not speak to me like dat. I tell you, I should not care ven all de vorld took me for a tief, if you should tink me ein honest man.—I lofe you every day more and more.'

'That is my intention,' said Esther. 'And I will never again say anything to distress you, my pet elephant, for you are grown as artless as a baby. Bless me, you old rascal, you have never known any innocence; the allowance bestowed on you when you came into the world was bound to come to the top some day; but it was buried so deep that it is only now reappearing at the age of sixty-six. Fished up by love's barbed hook.—This phenomenon is seen in old men.

'And this is why I have learnt to love you, you are young—so young! No one but I would ever have known this, Frédéric—I alone. For you were a banker at fifteen; even at college you must have lent your school-fellows one marble on condition of their returning two.'

Seeing him laugh, she sprang on to his knee.

'Well, you must do as you please! Bless me! plunder the men—go ahead, and I will help. Men are not worth loving; Napoleon killed them off like

flies. Whether they pay taxes to you or to the Government, what difference does it make to them? You don't make love over the budget, and on my honour!—go ahead, I have thought it over, and you are right. Shear the sheep! you will find it in the gospel according to Béranger.

'Now, kiss your Esther.—I say, you will give that poor Val-Noble all the furniture in the Rue Taitbout? And to-morrow I wish you would give her fifty thousand francs—it would look handsome, my duck. You see, you killed Falleix; people are beginning to cry out upon you, and this liberality will look Babylonian—all the women will talk about it. Oh! there will be no one in Paris so grand, so noble as you; and as the world is constituted, Falleix will be forgotten. So, after all, it will be money deposited at interest.'

'You are right, mein anchel; you know the vorld,' he replied. 'You shall be mein adfiser.'

'Well, you see,' said Esther, 'how I study my man's interest, his position and honour.—Go at once and bring those fifty thousand francs.'

She wanted to get rid of Monsieur de Nucingen so as to get a stockbroker to sell the bond that very afternoon.

'But vy dis minute?' asked he.

'Bless me, my sweetheart, you must give it to her in a little satin box wrapped round a fan. You must say, "Here, Madame, is a fan which I hope may be to your taste."—You are supposed to be a Turcaret, and you will become a Beaujon.'

'Charming, charming!' cried the Baron. 'I shall be so clever henceforth.—Yes, I shall repeat your vorts.'

Just as Esther had sat down, tired with the effort of playing her part, Europe came in.

'Madame,' said she, 'here is a messenger sent from the Quai Malaquais by Célestin, M. Lucien's servant——'

'Bring him in—no, I will go into the ante-room.'

'He has a letter for you, Madame, from Célestin.'

Esther rushed into the ante-room, looked at the messenger, and saw that he looked like the genuine thing.

'Tell *him* to come down,' said Esther, in a feeble voice, and dropping into a chair after reading the letter. 'Lucien means to kill himself,' she added in a whisper to Europe. 'No, take the letter up to him.'

Carlos Herrera, still in his disguise as a bagman, came downstairs at once, and keenly scrutinised the messenger on seeing a stranger in the ante-room.

'You said there was no one here,' said he in a whisper to Europe.

And with an excess of prudence, after looking at the messenger, he went straight into the drawing-room. *Trompe-la-Mort* did not know that for some time past the famous constable of the detective force who had arrested him at the Maison Vauquer had a rival, who, it was supposed, would replace him. This rival was the messenger.

'They are right,' said the sham messenger to Contenson, who was waiting for him in the street. 'The man you describe is in the house; but he is not a Spaniard, and I will burn my hand off if there is not a bird for our net under that priest's gown.'

'He is no more a priest than he is a Spaniard,' said Contenson.

'I am sure of that,' said the detective.

'Oh, if only we were right!' said Contenson.

Lucien had been away for two days, and advantage had been taken of his absence to lay this snare, but he returned this same evening, and the courtesan's anxieties were allayed. Next morning, at the hour when Esther, having taken a bath, was getting into bed again, Madame du Val-Noble arrived.

'I have the two pills!' said her friend.

'Let me see,' said Esther, raising herself with

her pretty elbow buried in a pillow trimmed with lace.

Madame du Val-Noble held out to her what looked like two black currants.

The Baron had given Esther a pair of greyhounds of famous pedigree, which will be always known by the name of the great contemporary poet who made them fashionable; and Esther, proud of owning them, had called them by the names of their parents, Romeo and Juliet. No need here to describe the whiteness and grace of these beasts, trained for the drawing-room, with manners suggestive of English propriety. Esther called Romeo; Romeo ran up on legs so supple and thin, so strong and sinewy, that they seemed like steel springs, and looked up at his mistress. Esther, to attract his attention, pretended to throw one of the pills.

'He is doomed by his name to die thus,' said she, as she threw the pill, which Romeo crushed between his teeth.

The dog made no sound; he rolled over, and was stark dead. It was all over while Esther spoke these words of epitaph.

'Good God!' shrieked Madame du Val-Noble.

'You have a cab waiting. Carry away the departed Romeo,' said Esther. 'His death would make a commotion here. I have given him to you, and you have lost him—advertise for him. Make haste; you will have your fifty thousand francs this evening.'

She spoke so calmly, so entirely with the cold indifference of a courtesan, that Madame du Val-Noble exclaimed—

'You are the Queen of us all!'

'Come early, and look very well——'

At five o'clock Esther dressed herself as a bride. She put on her lace dress over white satin, she had a white sash, white satin shoes, and a scarf of English point lace over her beautiful shoulders. In her hair she placed

white camellia flowers, the simple ornament of an innocent girl. On her bosom lay a pearl necklace worth thirty thousand francs, a gift from Nucingen.

Though she was dressed by six, she refused to see anybody, even the banker. Europe knew that Lucien was to be admitted to her room. Lucien came at about seven, and Europe managed to get him up to her mistress without anybody knowing of his arrival.

Lucien, as he looked at her, said to himself, 'Why not go and live with her at Rubempré, far from the world, and never see Paris again? I have an earnest of five years of her life, and the dear creature is one of those who never belie themselves! Where can I find such another perfect masterpiece?'

'My dear, you whom I have made my God,' said Esther, kneeling down on a cushion in front of Lucien, 'give me your blessing.'

Lucien tried to raise her and kiss her, saying, 'What is this jest, my dear love?' And he would have put his arm round her, but she freed herself with a gesture as much of respect as of horror.

'I am no longer worthy of you, Lucien,' said she, letting the tears rise to her eyes. 'I implore you, give me your blessing, and swear to me that you will found two beds at the Hôtel-Dieu—for, as to prayers in church, God will never forgive me unless I pray myself.

'I have loved you too well, my dear. Tell me that I made you happy, and that you will sometimes think of me.—Tell me that!'

Lucien saw that Esther was solemnly in earnest, and he sat thinking.

'You mean to kill yourself,' said he at last, in a tone of voice that revealed deep reflection.

'No,' said she. 'But to-day, my dear, the woman dies, the pure, chaste, and loving woman who once was yours.—And I am very much afraid that I shall die of grief.'

'Poor child,' said Lucien, 'wait! I have worked hard these two days. I have succeeded in seeing Clotilde——'

'Always Clotilde!' cried Esther, in a tone of concentrated rage.

'Yes,' said he, 'we have written to each other.—On Tuesday morning she is to set out for Italy, but I shall meet her on the road for an interview at Fontainebleau.'

'Bless me! what is it that you men want for wives? Wooden laths?' cried poor Esther. 'If I had seven or eight millions, would you not marry me—come now?'

'Child! I was going to say that if all is over for me, I will have no wife but you.'

Esther bent her head to hide her sudden pallor and the tears she wiped away.

'You love me?' said she, looking at Lucien with the deepest melancholy. 'Well, that is my sufficient blessing.—Do not compromise yourself. Go away by the side door, and come in to the drawing-room through the ante-room. Kiss me on the forehead.'

She threw her arms round Lucien, clasped him to her heart with frenzy, and said again—

'Go, only go—or I must live.'

When the doomed woman appeared in the drawing-room, there was a cry of admiration. Esther's eyes expressed infinitude in which the soul sank as it looked into them. Her blue-black and beautiful hair set off the camellias. In short, this exquisite creature achieved all the effects she had intended. She had no rival. She looked like the supreme expression of that unbridled luxury which surrounded her in every form. Then she was brilliantly witty. She ruled the orgy with the cold, calm power that Habeneck displays when conducting at the Conservatoire, at those concerts where the first musicians in Europe rise to the sublime in interpreting Mozart and Beethoven.

But she observed with terror that Nucingen ate

little, drank nothing, and was quite the master of the house.

By midnight everybody was crazy. The glasses were broken that they might never be used again ; two of the Chinese curtains were torn ; Bixiou was drunk, for the second time in his life. No one could keep his feet, the women were asleep on the sofas, and the guests were incapable of carrying out the practical joke they had planned of escorting Esther and Nucingen to the bedroom, standing in two lines with candles in their hands, and singing *Buona sera* from the *Barber of Seville.*

Nucingen simply gave Esther his hand. Bixiou, who saw them, though tipsy, was still able to say, like Rivarol, on the occasion of the Duc de Richelieu's last marriage, 'The police must be warned ; there is mischief brewing here.'

The jester thought he was jesting ; he was a prophet.

Monsieur de Nucingen did not go home till Monday at about noon. But at one o'clock his broker informed him that Mademoiselle Esther van Bogseck had sold the bond bearing thirty thousand francs interest on Friday last, and had just received the money.

'But, Monsieur le Baron, Derville's head-clerk called on me just as I was settling this transfer ; and after seeing Mademoiselle Esther's real names, he told me she had come into a fortune of seven millions.'

'Pooh !'

'Yes ; she is the only heir to the old bill-discounter Gobseck.—Derville will verify the facts. If your mistress's mother was the handsome Dutch woman, *la Belle Hollandaise*, as they called her, she comes in for——'

'I know dat she is,' cried the banker. 'She tolt me all her life. I shall write ein vort to Derville.'

The Baron sat down at his desk, wrote a line to Derville, and sent it by one of his servants. Then,

after going to the Bourse, he went back to Esther's house at about three o'clock.

'Madame forbade our waking her on any pretence whatever. She is in bed—asleep——'

'Ach der Teufel!' said the Baron. 'But, Europe, she shall not be angry to be tolt that she is fery, fery rich. She shall inherit seven millions. Old Gobseck is deat, and your mis'ess is his sole heir, for her moter vas Gobseck's own niece; and besides, he shall hafe left a vill. I could never hafe tought that a millionaire like dat man should hafe left Esther in misery!'

'Ah, ha! Then your reign is over, old pantaloon!' said Europe, looking at the Baron with an effrontery worthy of one of Molière's waiting-maids. 'Shooh! you old Alsatian crow! She loves you as we love the plague! Heavens above us! Millions!—Why, she may marry her lover; won't she be glad!'

And Prudence Servien left the Baron simply thunder-stricken, to be the first to announce to her mistress this great stroke of luck. The old man, intoxicated with superhuman enjoyment, and believing himself happy, had just received a cold shower-bath on his passion at the moment when it had risen to the intensest white heat.

'She vas deceiving me!' cried he, with tears in his eyes. 'Yes, she vas cheating me. Oh, Esther, my life! Vas a fool hafe I been! Can such flowers ever bloom for de old men! I can buy all vat I vill except only yout!—Ach Gott, ach Gott! Vat shall I do? Vat shall become of me?—She is right, dat cruel Europe. Esther, if she is rich, shall not be for me. Shall I go hank myself? Vat is life midout de divine flame of joy dat I have known? Mein Gott, mein Gott!'

The old man snatched off the false hair he had combed in with his grey hairs these three months past.

A piercing shriek from Europe made Nucingen quail to his very bowels. The poor banker rose and walked upstairs on legs that were drunk with the bowl of dis-

enchantment he had just swallowed to the dregs, for nothing is more intoxicating than the wine of disaster.

At the door of her room he could see Esther stiff on her bed, blue with poison—dead!

He went up to the bed and dropped on his knees.

'You are right! She tolt me so!—She is dead—of me——'

Paccard, Asie, every one hurried in. It was a spectacle, a shock, but not despair. Every one had their doubts. The Baron was a banker again. A suspicion crossed his mind, and he was so imprudent as to ask what had become of the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, the price of the bond. Paccard, Asie, and Europe looked at each other so strangely that Monsieur de Nucingen left the house at once, believing that robbery and murder had been committed. Europe, detecting a packet of a soft consistency, betraying the contents to be banknotes, under her mistress's pillow, proceeded at once to 'lay her out,' as she said.

'Go and tell Monsieur, Asie!—Oh, to die before she knew that she had seven millions! Gobseck was poor Madame's uncle!' said she.

Europe's stratagem was understood by Paccard. As soon as Asie's back was turned, Europe opened the packet, on which the hapless courtesan had written: 'To be delivered to Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré.'

Seven hundred and fifty thousand-franc notes shone in the eyes of Prudence Servien, who exclaimed—

'Won't we be happy and honest for the rest of our lives!'

Paccard made no objection. His instincts as a thief were stronger than his attachment to Trompe-la-Mort.

'Durut is dead,' he said at length; 'my shoulder is still a proof before letters. Let us be off together; divide the money, so as not to have all our eggs in one basket, and then get married.'

'But where can we hide?' said Prudence.

'In Paris,' replied Paccard.

Prudence and Paccard went off at once, with the promptitude of two honest folks transformed into robbers.

'My child,' said Carlos to Asie, as soon as she had said three words, 'find some letter of Esther's while I write a formal will, and then take the copy and the letter to Girard; but he must be quick. The will must be under Esther's pillow before the lawyers affix the seals here.'

And he wrote out the following will:—

'Never having loved any one on earth but Monsieur Lucien Chardon de Rubempré, and being resolved to end my life rather than relapse into vice and the life of infamy from which he rescued me, I give and bequeath to the said Lucien Chardon de Rubempré all I may possess at the time of my decease, on condition of his founding a mass in perpetuity in the parish church of Saint-Roch for the repose of her who gave him her all, to her last thought.

'Esther Gobseck.'

'That is quite in her style,' thought Trompe-la-Mort.

By seven in the evening this document, written and sealed, was placed by Asie under Esther's bolster.

'Jacques,' said she, flying upstairs again, 'just as I came out of the room justice marched in——'

'The justice of the peace you mean?'

'No, my son. The justice of the peace was there, but he had gendarmes with him. The public prosecutor and the examining judge are there too, and the doors are guarded.'

'This death has made a stir very quickly,' remarked Jacques Collin.

'Ay, and Paccard and Europe have vanished; I am

afraid they may have scared away the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs,' said Asie.

'The low villains!' said Collin. 'They have done for us by their swindling game.'

Human justice, and Paris justice, that is to say, the most suspicious, keenest, cleverest, and omniscient type of justice—too clever, indeed, for it insists on interpreting the law at every turn—was at last on the point of laying its hand on the agents of this horrible intrigue.

The Baron de Nucingen, on recognising the evidence of poison, and failing to find his seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, imagined that one of two persons whom he greatly disliked—either Paccard or Europe—was guilty of the crime. In his first impulse of rage he flew to the préfecture of police. This was a stroke of a bell that called up all Corentin's men. The officials of the préfecture, the legal profession, the chief of the police, the justice of the peace, the examining judge,—all were astir. By nine in the evening three medical men were called in to perform an autopsy on poor Esther, and inquiries were set on foot.

Trompe-la-Mort, warned by Asie, exclaimed—

'No one knows that I am here; I may take an airing.' He pulled himself up by the skylight of his garret, and with marvellous agility was standing in an instant on the roof, whence he surveyed the surroundings with the coolness of a tiler.

'Good!' said he, discerning a garden five houses off in the Rue de Provence, 'that will just do for me.'

'You are paid out, Trompe-la-Mort,' said Contenson, suddenly emerging from behind a stack of chimneys. 'You may explain to Monsieur Camusot what mass you were performing on the roof, Monsieur l'Abbé, and, above all, why you were escaping——'

'I have enemies in Spain,' said Carlos Herrera.

'We can go there by way of your attic,' said Contenson.

The sham Spaniard pretended to yield; but, having set his back and feet across the opening of the skylight, he gripped Contenson and flung him off with such violence that the spy fell in the gutter of the Rue Saint-Georges.

Contenson was dead on his field of honour; Jacques Collin quietly dropped into the room again and went to bed.

'Give me something that will make me very sick without killing me,' said he to Asie; 'for I must be at death's door, to avoid answering inquisitive persons. Do not be alarmed—I am a priest, and shall still be a priest. I have just got rid of a man in the most natural way, who might have unmasked me.'

At seven o'clock on the previous evening Lucien had set out in his own chaise to post to Fontainebleau with a passport he had procured in the morning; he slept in the nearest inn on the Nemours side. At six in the morning he went alone, and on foot, through the forest as far as Bouron.

'This,' said he to himself, as he sat down on one of the rocks that command the fine landscape of Bouron, 'is the fatal spot where Napoleon dreamed of making a final tremendous effort on the eve of his abdication.'

At daybreak he heard the approach of post-horses, and saw a britska drive past, in which sat the servants of the Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and Clotilde de Grandlieu's maid.

'Here they are!' thought Lucien. 'Now, to play the farce well, and I shall be saved!—The Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law in spite of him!'

It was an hour later when he heard the peculiar sound made by a superior travelling carriage, as the berline came near in which the two ladies were sitting. They had given orders that the drag should be put on for the

hill down to Bouron, and the manservant behind the carriage had it stopped.

At this instant Lucien came forward.

'Clotilde!' said he, tapping on the window.

'No,' said the young Duchess to her friend, 'he shall not get into the carriage, and we will not be alone with him, my dear. Speak to him for the last time—to that I consent; but on the road, where we will walk on, and where Baptiste can escort us.—The morning is fine, we are well wrapped up, and have no fear of the cold. The carriage can follow us.'

The two women got out.

'Baptiste,' said the Duchess, 'the post-boy can follow slowly; we want to walk a little way. You must keep near us.'

Madeleine de Mortsauf took Clotilde by the arm and allowed Lucien to talk. They thus walked on as far as the village of Grez. It was now eight o'clock, and there Clotilde dismissed Lucien.

'Well, my friend,' said she, closing this long interview with much dignity, 'I never shall marry any one but you. I would rather believe in you than in other men, in my father and mother—no woman ever gave greater proof of attachment surely?—Now, try to counteract the fatal prejudices which militate against you.'

Just then the tramp of galloping horses was heard, and, to the great amazement of the ladies, a force of gendarmes surrounded the little party.

'What do you want?' said Lucien, with the arrogance of a dandy.

'Are you Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré?' asked the public prosecutor of Fontainebleau.

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'You will spend to-night in La Force,' said he. 'I have a warrant for the detention of your person.'

'Who are these ladies?' asked the sergeant.

'To be sure.—Excuse me, ladies—your passports? For Monsieur Lucien, as I am instructed, had acquaintances among the fair sex, who for him would——'

'Do you take the Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu for a prostitute?' said Madeleine, with a magnificent flash at the public prosecutor.

'You are handsome enough to excuse the error,' the magistrate very cleverly retorted.

'Baptiste, produce the passports,' said the young Duchess with a smile.

'And with what crime is Monsieur de Rubempré charged?' asked Clotilde, whom the Duchess wished to see safe in the carriage.

'Of being accessory to a robbery and murder,' replied the sergeant of gendarmes.

Baptiste lifted Mademoiselle de Grandlieu into the chaise in a dead faint.

By midnight Lucien was entering La Force, a prison situated between the Rue Payenne and the Rue des Ballets, where he was placed in solitary confinement.

The Abbé Carlos Herrera was also there, having been arrested that evening.

END OF VOL. I.

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